

Ages and Developmental Stages: Symptoms of Exposure

As with other trauma types, children's responses to domestic violence vary with age and developmental stage. In addition, children's responses depend on the severity of the violence, their proximity to the violent events, and the responses of their caregivers.

The table below shows a brief list of possible reactions/symptoms by age: young children (birth to age 5), school-age children (aged 6 to 11) and adolescents (aged 12 to 18).

Age Birth to 5	Age 6 to 11	Age 12 to 18
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sleep and/or eating disruptions • Withdrawal/lack of responsiveness • Intense/pronounced separation anxiety • Inconsolable crying • Developmental regression, loss of acquired skills • Intense anxiety, worries, and/or new fears • Increased aggression and/or impulsive behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nightmares, sleep disruptions • Aggression and difficulty with peer relationships in school • Difficulty with concentration and task completion in school • Withdrawal and/or emotional numbing • School avoidance and/or truancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Antisocial behavior • School failure • Impulsive and/or reckless behavior, e.g., <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ School truancy ○ Substance abuse ○ Running away ○ Involvement in violent or abusive dating relationships • Depression • Anxiety • Withdrawal

It is important to remember that these symptoms can also be associated with other stressors, traumas, or developmental disturbances, and that they should be considered in the context of the child and family's functioning.