

Violence-free families

.....

How fathers can create violence-free families and prosperous communities



Our children are suffering, our families are suffering

A national survey has found that two out of every three women in Tonga have experienced physical violence by someone other than a partner since they were 15 years old. Tonga has one of the highest rates of non-partner violence in the world.¹

Often the physical violence starts as corporal punishment (disciplining children using physical violence) in our homes and schools. Both receiving and witnessing physical violence has an impact. Our sons and daughters are suffering, our families are suffering, our communities are suffering – it affects us all. Fathers don't want this. Nobody does.



Teaches them to use violence with future generations and in their communities

- ❖ A boy who experiences physical violence is at risk of using violence on his own wife and children when he grows up. He learns from his father's behaviour in the home.

Causes physical injury



What physical violence can do to your child



Teaches them to be victims

A girl who is beaten is more likely to enter an abusive relationship when she grows up. Because she has lived her whole life with physical violence, she accepts it and sees it as normal.

Creates feelings of:

- ❖ low self-worth
- ❖ negativity
- ❖ loneliness
- ❖ sadness
- ❖ fear
- ❖ worry
- ❖ shame
- ❖ numbness (they stop feeling).



Disrupts education

Experiencing violence can cause your child to:

- ❖ have disturbed sleep and nightmares
- ❖ concentrate poorly
- ❖ perform poorly at school
- ❖ be at risk of dropping out of school

Disrupts social and community life

Experiencing violence can cause your child to:

- ❖ have angry or rude outbursts at parents in social situations
- ❖ disobey orders
- ❖ withdraw and not communicate altogether
- ❖ say strange or inappropriate things to community members
- ❖ leave home early, perhaps even marry early to escape the home
- ❖ participate in high-risk behaviours such as drug taking.



Fathers care

As fathers, we want the best for our children and we often have long-term goals for them. For example, you might want your son or daughter to:

- ❖ be respectful
- ❖ get a good education, even study overseas, or
- ❖ get a good job.

We also have small goals we want our children to achieve each day such as listening to what we have to say or helping around the house. Often these daily goals for our children cause us stress, and sometimes we don't know how to discipline them without using violence.

But one act of punishment could destroy the dreams you have for your child and your whole family.

Is there violence in your family?

When you discipline your child, do you:

- ❖ beat them with a stick?
- ❖ threaten to beat them with a stick?
- ❖ cut their hair as a punishment?
- ❖ cut or burn their clothes?
- ❖ treat them like a servant?

If you answered 'yes' to any of these, you have violence in your family.

Using physical violence is against the law

Using a stick is VIOLENCE and it is ILLEGAL. It does not matter how badly behaved your child was. There is no excuse for violence.

The Family Protection Act 2013 is a law that protects everyone in the family from experiencing or witnessing violence. The law makes any act of physical violence, including using a stick to punish a child, a crime.² The offender (person being violent) could be fined up to \$2000, or go to prison for up to 12 months, or both, for his or her first time. After that, penalties are increased for repeat offences.

The Education Act 2013 protects children when they are at school and makes corporal punishment (physical or verbal abuse) of children illegal. It includes using the stick on students. For a first act the offender can be fined up to \$500.³ For repeated offences, penalties are even more severe.

How to create violence-free homes and a prosperous community

You have the power to help your children achieve the dreams you have for them. Children learn from the way you treat them.

How to discipline your children without using violence (without using the stick)

Children want to behave well. They just need some help to understand how to do this sometimes. Positive discipline teaches children how to stop annoying behaviour and make good decisions. You will need to use different strategies for children of different ages.

How to start using positive discipline

- 1. Never use violence or threaten to use violence.**
- 2. Remain calm** (leave the room if you need to).
- 3. Take time for yourself.** Parenting can be hard. Look after yourself, so you can be the best parent you can be – go for walks, talk to a neighbour.
- 4. Give your child choices about their behaviour**
 - ❖ A parent who is concerned about a teenager attending a party could say, "What are all of your options for Saturday night? What are the risks? What could happen? Which do you think is the safest choice?"
 - ❖ A parent who wants a two-year old to stop hitting another child with a toy could show the child other safer games to play, or show the child how to use the toy safely.
- 5. Explain why your child should change their behaviour, so they understand how their behaviour impacts others and themselves and they learn for next time.**

For example, a parent of a child who does not want to go to school could say, "If you don't go to school you won't learn. It will be hard for you to be a nurse like you told me you want to be. You best head off to school."
- 6. Praise your child for their good behaviour and good decision making**

Children learn from praise and rewards. When a child feels good, he or she tends to behave well. For example, if you see your child sharing their food with a younger upset sibling, you could say, "I really liked the way you shared your fruit with your brother, it shows me you are growing up. Well done!"
- 7. Discipline your child so they learn and take responsibility for their actions**

For example, if a child breaks a window at the church while playing soccer nearby, ask the child to do something to help repair the window or help the church by doing a job such as cutting the grass.

What are all of your options for Saturday night? What could happen? Which do you think is the safest choice?



What fathers can do: REFLECT. TEACH. ACT. LEAD.

There are four steps to creating a culture where violence is not accepted in your home.

1. REFLECT

Begin with yourself

To create a violence-free home, you must start with yourself. This can be hard, but it is the most important step.

- ❖ Make a choice not to be violent.
- ❖ Play an active role as a father.
- ❖ Talk about your feelings and what you need.
- ❖ Raise your sons and daughters with equal respect, and encourage all your children to follow their dreams.

2. TEACH

Be a good role model

Children learn how to treat each other by looking at the people around them and in their community. When they see words, behaviours, attitudes and beliefs that lead to violence, they learn that this is acceptable.

- ❖ Be a positive and strong family man. Prioritise family time together - you can make it fun.
- ❖ Value work that women do in the home and the community.
- ❖ Resolve conflict without violence. Talk about it instead.

3. ACT

Take action as a neighbour or friend

Being silent about violence in a neighbour's house allows it to keep happening. Being silent is as bad as committing the violence.

- ❖ If you see or hear violence, say something. If it is safe, gather some neighbours and knock on the door where the violence is happening.
- ❖ Speak to your friends who use violence and encourage different behaviour.
- ❖ Learn about the reality of violence in your community and talk about it with other men and friends.

4. LEAD

Be a champion

- ❖ Recognise the value and importance of children in the community.
- ❖ Use your power in the family and the community to stand up against violence.
- ❖ Show how our culture does not accept violence against women, youth and children.
- ❖ Support community, church, government or NGO programs that work to stop violence against children and women.



End notes

¹ National Study on Domestic Violence against Women in Tonga.

Nuku'alofa: Ma' a Fafine mo e Famili; 2012

² Family Protection Act 2013, Sections 28 (5) (a)

³ Education Act 2013, Sections 37 and 44 (2) b



Pacific
Community
Communauté
du Pacifique



This brochure was developed by the Pacific Community's Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) in partnership with the Government of The Kingdom of Tonga and other stakeholders in Tonga. It draws from domestic violence materials produced in South Africa, New Zealand and Australia and is funded by UN Women and the Australian Government.

With special thanks to stakeholders and partners working to end violence against women and girls in Tonga.