



The Children Next Door
A Study Guide for Social Work Educators and Students

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Foreword

This guide has been developed to assist social work educators and students in using films from the CSWE film festivals in their classrooms. It is one in a series of CSWE curriculum resources designed to enhance the teaching and learning of social work concepts.

We welcome your comments as the library of these resources is refined and expanded.

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Overview

The Children Next Door

Film Information

Title: <i>The Children Next Door</i>	A Film by: Doug Block
Running Time: 36 minutes	Distributed by: http://thechildrennextdoor.com/

Context: The story chronicles one family’s resilience in the face of domestic violence perpetrated on one parent by another parent. The oldest child, Chelsea, is shadowed through much of the short film. Her change in maturity, perspective, and resolve punctuate a pattern of resilience. Other themes in the film include a call to end the cycle of violence learned by children of violent parents.

Overall Themes:

1. Domestic Violence
2. Adverse Childhood Experiences (Trauma)
3. Family Dynamics
4. Adolescent Resilience

Time Code	Topic	Central Quote	Salient Themes
00:00–03:11	Introduction	<p>“Actually, I remember everything.” (01:47)</p> <p>“I knew I was going to die.” (02:29)</p> <p>“... It sometimes crossed my mind ... he’ll come back for mom” (03:05)</p>	<p>Domestic Violence</p> <p>Emotional Fearfulness</p>
03:12–05:52	Roll Call	<p>“Probably a dad.” (05:42)</p>	<p>Family Dynamics</p> <p>Birth Order</p> <p>Childhood Trauma</p>
05:53–08:46	I Could Kick Myself	<p>“He was my hero. I loved him ... and I hated my mom.” (05:54)</p>	<p>Parental Manipulation</p> <p>Recovery</p> <p>Financial Strain</p> <p>Survivor Guilt</p>
08:47–15:37	Realization Chelsea	<p>“Because of what you went through, you are stronger and more courageous ...” (11:35)</p>	<p>School Services</p> <p>Parental Loss</p> <p>Suppression</p> <p>Trust Issues</p>
15:38–25:39	New York and Other Visits	<p>“It’s taken me 5 years.” (19:04)</p>	<p>Anger and Motivation</p> <p>Visitation in Prison</p> <p>Resilience</p> <p>Gaining a Parent</p> <p>Poverty</p>
25:40–34:20	Origins of Abuse	<p>“... They both thought they could change ... but then they never got help.”</p>	<p>Retribution</p> <p>Cycle of Domestic Violence</p> <p>Fairytale Expectations</p> <p>Parental Affection</p> <p>Advocacy</p>

Topics

Introduction

Time Code: 00:00–03:11

Central Quotes: “Actually, I remember everything.” (01:47)

“I knew I was going to die.” (02:29)

“... It sometimes crossed my mind ... he’ll come back for mom” (03:05)

Themes: Domestic Violence, Emotional Fearfulness

Abstract: The film opens with a 911 call. This segment offers a teaser into the family’s story. It combines brief glimpses of the children and Penny, the mom, to introduce the perspective of the film. The film intends to present domestic violence from the children’s point of view.

Learning Objectives

1. Define *domestic violence*.
2. Define *adverse childhood experiences*.
3. Identify challenges to resilience and risk factors present in the family environment.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you know about domestic violence?
2. What are adverse childhood experiences?
3. What would you do for a child who has witnessed a traumatic event perpetrated by a parent on another parent?

Suggested Readings

Bancroft, L., Silverman, J. G., & Ritchie, D. (2011). *The batterer as parent: Addressing the impact of domestic violence on family dynamics*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Dutton, D. G. (2011). *Rethinking domestic violence*. Vancouver, Canada: UBC Press.

Hellerstedt, W. L. (2013, Spring). Adverse childhood experience: Public health surveillance measures. *Healthy Generations*, 16–19.

Roll Call

Time Code: 03:12–05:52

Central Quote: “Probably a dad.” (05:42)

Themes: Family Dynamics, Birth Order, Childhood Trauma

Abstract: Each of the four children is introduced by another family member. Emily is described by mom as the center of attention. Elijah is the only boy surrounded by sisters. Chelsea is a mix of emotions. Ashley is unique and unpredictable.

Learning Objectives

1. Explore the impact of birth order on the functioning of the family.
2. Identify patterns of socialization that differ by gender and impact behavior in sibling cohorts.
3. Explore the reactions of children who experience the loss of a parent.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you think that birth order has anything to do with the personalities of the children? Why or why not?
2. Consider what it must be like growing up as the only male in a household of females. What benefits and costs might Elijah experience?
3. How do you explain Emily’s comment that she would want a dad?
4. At this point in the film, what information would be useful in constructing an ecomap of the Waldroup family?
5. Compare and contrast the reactions of children who have lost a parent to incarceration versus death or divorce.

Suggested Readings

Allen, J. L. (2014, April). *Grief and loss through the eyes of a child: A deeper understanding of how schools can support youth (K–5) with the loss of a parent*. Poster presented at the Master’s Level Graduate Research Conference, Paper 136, Brockport, NY. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/gradconf/2014/Schedule/136/>

Cohen, P., Sossin, K. M., & Ruth, R. (Eds.). (2014). *Healing after parent loss in childhood and adolescence: Therapeutic interventions and theoretical considerations*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Krause, P., Heindl, J., Jung, A., Langguth, B., Hajak, G., & Sand, P. G. (2014). Risk attitudes and birth order. *Journal of Health Psychology, 19*, 858–868.

I Could Kick Myself

Time Code: 05:53–08:46

Central Quote: “He was my hero. I loved him ... and I hated my mom.” (05:54)

Themes: Parental Manipulation, Recovery, Financial Strain, Survivor Guilt

Abstract: Chelsea and Penny’s relationship is revealed in the context of Brad’s interaction with them both. The economic struggle of the family is highlighted. Penny’s injury, recovery, and the hole left in the family are hinted, including physical, financial, and emotional factors.

Learning Objectives

1. Review the Domestic Violence Wheel of Power and Control.
2. Outline the challenges that may face a single mother of four children.
3. List the services and interventions that may be appropriate for the Waldroup family.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think that Brad attempted to provide that view of the mom to Chelsea?
2. What services would you consider are warranted for a family in this situation?
3. How many intersecting challenges can you identify affecting the physical, financial, and emotional health of the Waldroup family?
4. Explain Penny’s anger directed toward herself for staying in the relationship as long as she did.

Suggested Readings

Elizabeth, V. (2003). Separating from violent male partners: A resistant act in the midst of power relations. *Journal of International Women’s Studies*, 4(3), 62–80.

Stith, S. M., & McCollum, E. E. (2011). Conjoint treatment of couples who have experienced intimate partner violence. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 16, 312–318.

Whiting, J. B., Oka, M., & Fife, S. T. (2012). Appraisal distortions and intimate partner violence: Gender, power, and interaction. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 38(S1), 133–149.

Realization Chelsea

Time Code: 08:47–15:37

Central Quote: “Because of what you went through, you are stronger and more courageous ...” (11:35)

Themes: School Services, Parental Loss, Suppression, Trust Issues

Abstract: The Waldroup family is introduced to a helper. Chelsea finds her anger after the family appears on the *Dr. Phil* TV program. At school, Chelsea gets help from a psychologist.

Learning Objectives

1. Identify ego defenses that are useful in response to trauma.
2. Compare and contrast the role of a psychologist versus a school social worker in your area.
3. List community services, including school services, available to adolescents in the community.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you think that it is normal that Chelsea doesn't get close to anyone?
2. What indicators do you look for to balance typical adolescent behavior in relationships and Chelsea's behavior?
3. Do you think the counselor had anything to do with Chelsea wanting to visit her dad?
4. What do you think is the source of the mom's ambivalence? Chelsea thinks her mom fears that Chelsea will hate her again.

Suggested Readings

Brooks, M. (2011). *Vicarious trauma and therapists: An exploration of influential factors* (Doctoral dissertation). Pacific University, Hillsboro, OR. Retrieved from <http://commons.pacificu.edu/spp/224>

Evren, C., Ozcetinkaya, S., Ulku, M., Cagil, D., Gokalp, P., Cetin, T., & Yigiter, S. (2012). Relationship of defense styles with history of childhood trauma and personality in heroin dependent inpatients. *Psychiatry Research, 200*, 728–733.

Vaillant, G. E. (2011). Involuntary coping mechanisms: A psychodynamic perspective. *Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience, 13*(3), 366–370.

New York and Other Visits

Time Code: 15:38–25:39

Central Quote: “It’s taken me 5 years.” (19:04)

Themes: Anger and Motivation, Visitation in Prison, Resilience, Gaining a Parent, Poverty

Abstract: Chelsea explains how anger motivates her. Mom makes a decision to allow Chelsea to visit her dad in prison. The film documents the change in Chelsea after the trip to New York.

Learning Objectives

1. Compare and contrast Penny’s view and Chelsea’s view of Brad.
2. List observation skills that may be important during home visits to clients.
3. Explore mental health explanations for reactions to trauma.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you make of the lack of physical engagement by mom?
2. What would you think Chelsea would say to her father if she met him in prison?
3. Beyond Chelsea getting to see her father, what do you think explains the difference in Chelsea’s behavior after returning from New York?
4. Notice the condition of the trailer home at minute 23:41. What do you think explains the condition of the home?
5. Why do you think Penny has been unable to read the letter from Brad all the way through?

Suggested Readings

Brinamen, C. F., Taranta, A. N., & Johnston, K. (2012). Expanding early childhood mental health consultation to new venues: Serving infants and young children in domestic violence and homeless shelters. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, *33*, 283–293.

Howard, L. M., Trevillion, K., & Agnew-Davies, R. (2010). Domestic violence and mental health. *International Review of Psychiatry*, *22*, 525–534.

Warshaw, C. (2012, March). *Working at the intersection of domestic violence, substance abuse and mental health: Creating trauma-informed services and organizations*. Preconference institute at the Sixth Biennial National Conference on Health and Domestic Violence, San Francisco, CA.

Origins of Abuse

Time Code: 25:40–34:20

Central Quote: “...They both thought they could change . . . but then they never got help.”

Themes: Retribution, Cycle of Domestic Violence, Fairytale Expectations, Parental Affection, Advocacy

Abstract: Chelsea is heartbroken after learning that her father refuses to see her. Penny seems uncertain about how to console her. The awareness project the family has undertaken is highlighted. Chelsea voices another level of resilience, purpose, and learning gained through the domestic violence awareness project.

Learning Objectives

1. Explore the services available to children of domestic violence in your area.
2. Articulate how purpose and learning can support resilience.
3. Identify vital statistics on domestic violence specifically in regard to children.

Discussion Questions

1. What type of help do you think would have benefitted Penny and Brad prior to marriage?
2. What type of help do you think would help Penny and Brad after they were married?
3. How do you explain the awkwardness of mom not knowing how to console Chelsea after she found out her father refused to see her? (30:07)
4. Why do you think that children of domestic violence are more likely to repeat the cycle of violence?

Suggested Readings

Humphreys, C., & Absler, D. (2011). History repeating: Child protection responses to domestic violence. *Child & Family Social Work, 16*, 464–473.

Selic, P., Pesjak, K., & Kersnik, J. (2011). The prevalence of exposure to domestic violence and the factors associated with co-occurrence of psychological and physical violence exposure: a sample from primary care patients. *BMC Public Health, 11*, 621+.

Trevillion, K., Rose, D., Feder, G., Morgan, C., Woodall, A., & Howard, L. (2011). The response of mental health services to domestic violence. *Psychiatrische Praxis, 38*(S1), P59_TP.