

Why are some young victims of domestic violence resilient?

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More than 10 million U.S. children witness domestic violence yearly, resulting in a range of emotional and behavioral problems. A new study suggests that the reason some of these children are resilient is because of their easy temperaments and because they have mentally healthy moms.

The longitudinal study, conducted by researchers at Michigan State University, is published in the March/April 2009 issue of the journal *Child Development*.

The researchers looked at more than 100 American children who had witnessed violent acts against their [mothers](#) when the children were 2, 3, and 4 years old. They also looked at more than 70 children who hadn't witnessed violence against their mothers.

Children exposed to violence were almost four times more likely than others to develop emotional or behavioral problems. However, more than half of the children who were exposed to violence adapted well, at least in part because of their easy-going natures and the mental health of their mothers.

Easy-going children may be less likely to react to the stresses in their lives, and more likely to get support from their caregivers and other adults. Mothers with good mental health may be more likely to be available to their children and have the resources to help them cope with the stresses of being exposed to [domestic violence](#). On the other hand, children who were chronically exposed to domestic violence often

lacked these individual and family protective characteristics and were more likely to have emotional or [behavioral problems](#).

"Taken together, these findings underscore the differences in how [children](#) adapt and highlight the importance of individual and family resources to face the challenges of growing up in a highly detrimental environment," according to Cecilia Martinez-Torteya, [clinical psychology](#) graduate student at Michigan State University and the study's lead author. "Intervention efforts may be improved by targeting mothers' symptoms of [depression](#) and considering children's temperaments."

Source: Society for Research in Child Development ([news](#) : [web](#))

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