

## Strategies DV Survivors Use to Protect their Children

### Safe Start Project – Multnomah County

- Staving off fights with the abusive person until the children are asleep or out of the house
- Lying to the abuser to protect the children (e.g., covering for mistakes they make that might lead to abuse)
- Getting the abuser mad at her to distract him from the children (i.e., taking their punishments for them)
- Leaving them with relatives or babysitters frequently to keep them out of the house so they aren't around the abuser
- Enrolling them in activities to keep them busy and away from the abuser
- Becoming extremely cooperative and compliant with the abuser ("putting up with the abuse") to reduce the children's exposure to the extreme reactions the abuser displays when the survivor stands up for herself
- Punishing the children in a less severe way than the abuser would, even if it is more harshly than she thinks is ok (e.g., spanking the children quickly before he gets a chance to do it, because he hits them so hard)
- Physically or verbally intervening when the abuser is harming or threatening the children
- Not saying anything to the abuser when he mistreats the children, because she knows or fears that the abuse will retaliate by hurting the children more severely whenever she sticks up for them
- Becoming an extremely strict parent to keep the children from upsetting the abuser
- Calling the police
- Leaving the abuser for periods of time
- Returning to the abuser after leaving
- Not attempting to leave the abuser
- Trying to get friends or relatives to pressure the abuser about their behavior
- Trying to get the abuser to stop drinking

- Making a safety plan with the children (such as planning places to run or hide, developing a code word, hiding a cell phone for emergency use, teaching the children how to call 911, etc.)
- Teaching the children not to blame themselves for the actions of others
- Encouraging the children's independence, teaching the children to think for themselves
- Having the children see a counselor
- Giving up custody of the children (to the state or the abuser)
- Denying the abuse to child protective services to keep the abuser from retaliating
- Having unwanted sex with the batterer to placate or distract them
- Seeking sole custody post-separation
- Requesting supervised visitation for the abuser post-separation
- Giving the children extra love, attention, affection and reassurance
- Engaging the children in constructive, healing discussions about the abuse that they have witnessed, making it okay to talk about
- Practicing and modeling self-care and self-respect