

# Helping Workers with Thinking Errors in Domestic Violence Cases

Thinking Errors	Examples of indicators of thinking errors (or what workers might say to you)	Examples of supervisor's responses to thinking errors (or what you can say to worker)
<p>Assuming that indicators of domestic violence will only be physical violence or signs of physical violence</p>	<p><b>“I checked the criminal history and there are no reports of domestic violence.”</b></p> <p><b>“I screened for domestic violence. She said there he had never been violent with her.”</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>“What do we know/what did you learn in your interviews about a pattern of coercive control?”</i></li> <li>● <i>“How did she respond to your questions about emotional abuse, control over finances?”</i></li> <li>● <i>“What do learn about her ability to see friends, work, go to school, have contact with her family?”</i></li> <li>● <i>“What did she say about how he supports her parenting?”</i></li> <li>● <i>“What does he do to show his respect for her?”</i></li> </ul>
<p>Focusing only on an incident versus the history or pattern of coercive control.</p>	<p><b>“She said this had never happened before.”</b></p> <p><b>“I met with the children afterwards and they didn't have any marks and seem to be fine.”</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>“What is he saying to children about why he was arrested/out of the house?”</i></li> <li>● <i>“Tell me about his history of respecting courts orders/her wishes.”</i></li> <li>● <i>“What do you think his role is in being back in the house?”</i></li> <li>● <i>“Do you have a sense of how he would respond/how he has responded in the past if she tried to keep him out or set boundaries?”</i></li> <li>● <i>“What does she say about other violent relationships?”</i></li> </ul>

<p>Assuming that if the survivor is still with the perpetrator she either is choosing the perpetrator over the children, or doesn't understand the domestic violence.</p>	<p><b>“She let him back into the home.”</b></p> <p><b>“I took her to the court but she told them DCF wanted her to get the restraining order so she didn't get it.”</b></p> <p><b>“She's picking him over the children.”</b></p> <p><b>“You know she has a history of domestic violence relationships. I don't think she gets it.”</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>What were her efforts in those earlier relationships to keep herself safe?”</i></li> <li>● <i>Have you spoken to her about what he would do if she didn't let him back?</i></li> <li>● <i>What do we know about the kind of pressure he is exerting over her?</i></li> <li>● <i>Why do you think it's better for her and the children for him not to be back in the home?</i></li> </ul>
<p>Assuming that because the domestic violence perpetrator is no longer in the home that he no longer is influencing the family.</p>	<p><b>“The court ordered him out of the house.”</b></p> <p><b>“Mom can't seem to control the children.”</b></p> <p><b>“What's wrong with her? He's in jail and she went to see him.”</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>“What contact is he having with the children?”</i></li> <li>● <i>“What do we know about what he's done to undermine her parenting/ her authority with the children?”</i></li> <li>● <i>“Do you think the children/mother are still worried about him coming back?”</i></li> <li>● <i>“What worries does she have about his response to the divorce/ separation?”</i></li> <li>● <i>“How is he talking to the children during the visits about the divorce/separation/arrest?”</i></li> </ul>
<p>Thinking that if the children weren't physically present at the time of an incident that was physically violent this is automatically no impact on the children.</p>	<p><b>“The children didn't see anything.”</b></p> <p><b>“The children were asleep and anyway they are too young to be really negatively impacted by what happened.”</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>“Did you ask about the mother about any disturbances in the children's mood, feeding schedule/intake, sleep, toilet training since the incident?”</i></li> <li>● <i>“What time of day did this incident happen?”</i></li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Did it mess up any part of the children's routine?"</i></li> <li>● <i>"How have the children responded to their father not being in the house/seeing him arrested?"</i></li> </ul>
Ignoring the strengths of mothers of children in homes where there is domestic violence because they are mothers.	<b>(Doesn't talk about anything she does to take care of the children, buffer them from the violence, and promote stability in the children's life.)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>"What have you learned about her strategies to calm him down/keep the kids away from him when he's upset?"</i></li> <li>● <i>"What have you learned about how she keeps the kids on track despite the violence?"</i></li> <li>● <i>"When he's being abusive, whose making sure the kids are getting to school/getting to the doctors?"</i></li> </ul>
Marginalizing the importance of the domestic violence perpetrator to the children and the survivor.	<p><i>"She should just leave him."</i></p> <p><i>"He's no good for those kids."</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>"What do the children say about their father?"</i></li> <li>● <i>"What are her hopes for the relationship?"</i></li> <li>● <i>"What have you learned about her family's response to the violence/to staying together?"</i></li> </ul>