

# Finding a positive path...

63% of boys age 11-20 who commit murder, kill the man who was abusing their mother.\* A child witnessing domestic violence is the strongest risk factor for transmitting violent behavior to the next generation.\*\* What children DO with what they've witnessed is critical. Art can be a window of safety for children to find a positive path through trauma.



*“He was finally able to put a face on his anger... He became a mentor to the new kids at the shelter and encouraged them to share their feelings.”*

A seven year-old boy had witnessed a lot of domestic violence and traumatic events in a short period of time. When he came to the shelter with his mom and family, he was extremely impacted by these events and had many behavioral issues. He acted out constantly — angry, lashing out, and violent. When anyone tried to talk with him about the anger and his feelings, he would shrink back and detach, eyes glazed over. It was as if he lost any connection with his body.

One day, he had a terrible outburst. To calm him, I did the Monster in Me art project with him. He was very quiet in the beginning, drawing on his own and not using any words. I wasn't sure if he was getting anything out of it. When he was finished with his art, his monster had no ears. He wrote that since his monster didn't have ears, he was not able to hear himself yelling. Somehow, realizing this, he felt he could now stop yelling.

This was a big turn around for him. He was finally able to put a face on his anger and had a better understanding of the feelings that resulted from his trauma. After that workshop, he started to share and communicate more. He became a mentor to the new kids at the shelter and encouraged them to share their feelings. We created a Feelings Faces poster together. He drew all the faces and came up with the feelings that were shown.

He has since left the shelter, and his mom and teachers have shared that now he is more in touch with his feelings, and is able to express himself in healthier ways.



Based on annual evaluations submitted by 90 active Children's Windows programs in 2015:  
99% of Leaders reported the art workshops helped the children to communicate in a non-violent way

\* National Coalition Against Domestic Violence & FBI Crime Statistics.

\*\* American Psychology Association Presidential Task Force on Violence and the Family