

Voices on Violence

How do you feel when violence is committed against you?

"What happened?" his friend asked, taken by surprise at how upset James was.

"I feel my heart will explode if I start saying how I feel. He treats me as if I am an animal and there is nothing I can do about it. I feel like running away and living on the streets. At least I would not have to put up with so much insult," James said to his friend. "My uncle insulted me and beat me in front of all our neighbours because he said I let the chicken escape. He slapped me five times and shouted abuse at me. Everyone was staring at me."

"That is terrible," his friend sympathised. "You know what he is like. Just let it go."

James knew his friend was just trying to make him feel better so he remained silent for a while. "You know" he said, when he felt a little calmer, "everyone says that I should not mind him, but no one sees that it makes me feel so bad when he treats me like that. Sometimes I think about hanging myself from a tree. At least I can then join my parents in paradise where they are waiting for me. What is left for me here, except insults?"

"I don't think adults realise how strongly children feel when they are treated unfairly," his friend said. "Yes, they just laugh and think that children are over-acting," James replied. They say, 'let him cry, he will get over it.' They would never do the same if they saw an adult crying or hurting like that would they?", he asked his friend.

"No," his friend replied thoughtfully.

"Then why do they do it against children? Why do they pretend that children don't feel things?" James asked.

In a study completed recently, two thirds of the children said they felt intense anger towards the adult who had humiliated them. Almost a similar number said they felt scared of the person who had violated them. Many children revealed transitional thoughts of wanting to commit suicide.

Raising Voices, P o Box 6770,
Kampala, Uganda
info@raisingvoices.org
www.raisingvoices.org