

Parents and others who care for young people can help them learn to deal with emotions without using violence. Because violence results from conflicts between people, it can be prevented by learning nonviolent ways to control anger and solve problems. Teaching your teen, through words and actions, that violence is never an acceptable form of behavior is very important. The tips provided here can help you.

Quick Facts

Almost 16 million teens have witnessed some form of violent assault.

About one in eight people murdered in the United States each year are younger than 18 years of age.

Research shows a link between violent television programs and aggressive behavior in teens who watch those programs.

Most injuries and violent deaths occur between people who know each other.

If there is violence in your family, it increases the risk of your teen becoming involved in future violence.

A gun in the home is more likely to be used to kill a family member or friend than to kill an intruder.

Tips for Parents

1. Start talking about ways to reduce or eliminate violence.

- Team up with other parents and get involved in your community; join your neighbors in activities to reduce violence.
- Talk to your teen about ways to solve arguments and fights without weapons or violence.
- Advise your teen to talk to you or a trusted adult to avoid potentially violent situations.
- If you suspect a problem with your teen, start talking about it.

2. Monitor the media.

- Limit the amount of television your teen watches to 1 to 2 hours a day (including music videos and video games).
- Do not allow your teen to watch violent movies or TV programs.
- If something violent comes on the TV, talk about what is wrong with the program and how the situation could have been handled in a nonviolent way.

3. Be a role model by handling problems in nonviolent ways.

- Don't hit your teen. Model non-physical solutions to problem solving.
- Count to 10. Cool off. If you can't control your anger, tell your teen you need some time to get your thoughts and feelings under control.
- ~~Problem solve with your teen. Think together~~ about options and consequences for behaviors.
- Set limits, make sure your teen knows the rules and consequences, and follow through.
- Don't carry a gun. This sends a message to your teen that using guns solves problems.

4. Reduce the threat of gun-related violence to your teen.

- Make certain your teen does not have access to guns. If you have a gun, remove it from your home or store it unloaded and locked up. Lock and store bullets separately.

- Tell your teen to stay away from potentially dangerous situations and from guns in homes of friends or places where he or she may visit or play.
- Keep in mind that teens don't always follow the rules. Also, teens are attracted to guns and see guns as symbols of power. Since you can't always count on teens to stay away from guns, you have to keep guns away from them.

5. Help your teen deal with anger.

- Anger is a normal feeling. Anger does not have to be bad if it is expressed appropriately. Teach your teen that it is okay to be angry, but it's not okay to throw a punch.
- People must control their anger before they can control a situation.
- Sometimes counseling is necessary to help teens deal with their anger appropriately.

Steps your teen can take to avoid violence or injury

1. Recognize situations or events that are likely to escalate into violence.
2. Stop whatever you are doing and count to 10 backward. This will help you think about your feelings before they get out of control.
3. If you can't control your anger, get away. Take a time out.
4. Think about the options and consequences of your actions. For example, hitting someone could result in suspension from school or injury.
5. If necessary, get help from a third party to solve differences.
6. Cool off. Make sure you are calm and then talk to the person.
7. Listen carefully to the other person's opinion.
8. Be assertive, not aggressive. Stand up for your ideals. Begin every sentence with "I." For example: "I feel this way..." or "I don't like it when..."
9. Be willing to admit and be responsible for something you may have done wrong.
10. Respond with your HEAD, not your fists, threats, or weapons.

Resources

Your teen's health care provider.

Adolescent Health On-Line

<http://www.ama-assn.org/go/adolescenthealth>

American Medical Association

Violence Prevention Web site

<http://www.ama-assn.org/violence>

American Psychological Association

800 374-3120

<http://www.apa.org>

Children's Safety Network

<http://www.edc.org/HHD/csn>

Federal Safety Hotline

888 252-7751

Medem, Inc. An e-health network developed by the nation's leading medical societies

<http://www.medem.com>

National Citizen's Crime Prevention Campaign

For information on preventing community violence call 800 937-7383.

Surgeon General's Report on Youth Violence

Available by calling 800 789-2647 or visiting

<http://surgeongeneral.gov/library/youthviolence>

Your local or city police department.

Your local school.

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