

PARENTS: *Help stamp out school violence*

Q: I see a lot of problems at my children's schools. Can you suggest some steps I can take to help improve our schools?

A: All parents, especially those concerned with their children's schools, need to become more involved. Here are some steps to take in this.

- Teach your children about listening, healthy debate, obeying, and so on. This way the teacher can focus more on the curriculum instead of stopping every five minutes to correct a child's behavior.
- Encourage your children and their friends to be involved in sports, clubs, and other extracurricular activities.
- Volunteer to help in different areas of your child's school, such as, the office, lunchroom, classroom, etc. You could also help with the extracurricular activities as well.
- Talk about and think about the good things about the school. Don't always focus on the negative, because your child will see that and most likely do the same.

Other Ideas:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Parents: Talk with Your Children About Violence

- **Communicate openly and honestly.** Have your children ask questions, and answer those questions as clearly and thoroughly as you can. If you don't have an answer to the question, look, with your child, until you find it. Also, make sure to keep talking. Talk as much as possible.

- **Have them talk out their feelings.** When your child seems angry, afraid, hurt, alone, etc. ask them questions and have them talk about their problem. This is a good way for them to let off some steam without resorting to violence.
- **Tip toe around media.** When it comes to violence, or talk about violence, make sure to turn the television off, or wait until the movie lets out, and talk with your children about their feelings on it, and what you think about it. Make sure to emphasize the consequences of violence.
- **Learn from TV's violent messages.** Prohibit any inappropriate television shows, songs, movies, video games, etc. Use parental control devices on the television and computer so you know that your child is watching a safe program, or browsing a safe site.
- **Let your children know they are safe, and that you care about their fears.** If your child becomes afraid, talk about their fears, and reassure them that you will do everything in your power to keep them safe and at peace.
- **Stay strong.** When setting limits, stick to them, and don't let your child talk you out of it. This shows that things such as violence are not tolerated, and your children will learn to stay away from it.
- **Watch yourself.** Make sure to keep calm, cool, and collected when in an intense situation. Keep violence, abusive words, and yelling out of the situation.
- **Talk about actions and reactions towards others.** Make sure your child knows that bullying and teasing are not permitted. Tell them that this hurts people's hearts and feelings when this is done, whether they show it or not. Do not tolerate hitting, biting, pushing, kicking, scratching, or any other physical fighting. Help your children to figure out mature, peaceful ways to solve conflicts.
- **Start up family meetings.** Have them once or twice a week. Talk about feelings, opinions, complaints, etc. Make sure everyone gets to speak on whatever is on his or her minds. Be sure to go over appropriate problem-solving methods and peaceful negotiation skills. Keep these meetings interesting and creative, so the children will want to be involved.

- **Have rules, strict rules, about weapons.** Let your child know that guns, knives and other weapons are very dangerous and can cause a lot of pain to other people. Teach them that they can also kill people. Talk about the difference between shootings in cartoons and video games to real life shootings.

- **Talk about cliques, gangs, etc.** Talk about the dangers of negative or antisocial behaviors that these gangs or cliques may try to have members take part in. Talk about consequences of joining gangs: you could get hurt or killed, etc. Get them involved in a program that prevents gang violence (if one is located in your community).

- **Talk to other parents.** Tell the parent of your children’s friends what you do and do not allow when it comes to toys, television, games, etc. Let them know that your family is promoting anti-violence to your children, and that you would appreciate it if they would do the same.

- **Pay special attention to boys.** Boys are more subject to violence, as proven in past situations. Boys love action, and sometimes that leads to violence. But it doesn’t have to, and you need to talk to your boy(s) about that. Boys don’t usually like to talk out their feelings, especially about violence, but you need to be there to listen when he does, even if the timing isn’t convenient for you.

- **Get schools involved.** Make sure your school has some sort of violence prevention effort. Have teachers learn how to prevent violence.

- **Add to your resources.** Find organizations that prevent violence, or that promote anti-violence, or go to the library and find books, videos, articles, etc. on the subject matter.

What additional ideas can you think of to head off violence before it raises its ugly head in your community:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____