



An Overview of Violence Prevention

Violence prevention consists of stopping a person from inflicting emotional or physical harm on another *before* it happens. TV often reports on violence by children and adults. In fact, some surveys show that Americans rate crime as one of the most important problems facing our country. At the same time, research shows that there has been a decrease in violence over the last 5 years.

There is no single reason why children commit violent acts or become victims of violence. The causes and effects of violence are complicated. But you can help your child avoid violence by understanding some of the factors that help prevent it.

- *Understand your child's temperament.* Children who are easily irritated or impulsive, or who have a short attention span, are more likely than other children to hit or yell. Parents may need to spend time helping impulsive children learn to be patient and talk through their problems.
- *Understand your child's developmental stages.* It helps to have realistic expectations for your children's behavior. Knowing what to expect during the early, middle, and teen years helps parents help their children build a foundation of nonviolent coping skills for successful adulthood.
- *Understand the impact of domestic violence.* Children who see violence in their own families are in danger of being abused or becoming abusers, doing poorly in school, having low self-esteem, and breaking the law. Reducing or eliminating the violence at home can make a big difference.
- *Understand that there are different ways to parent.* Parents who share their cultural background and family expectations by responding to their children, supporting their efforts in and out of school, and engaging in nonviolent discipline are more likely than other parents to have children who have friends and do well in school.
- *Understand that a strong family is important.* Children who live in families that appreciate each family member, spend time together, communicate with each other, are committed to each other, have the ability to resolve problems positively, and have a commitment to a faith community are often more resilient and less prone to violence than other children. Parents can work on strengthening their own families.
- *Understand that a strong community is important.* Children raised in communities where they have access to health care, adequate housing, a good education, enriching after-school activities, caring adults, and employment opportunities tend to transition more successfully into adulthood than other children. Parents can help by working to assure these things within their communities.

These summaries and the more comprehensive *Violence Prevention Resource Guide for Parents* are intended to help you feel prepared for the parenting journey as it relates to violence and your children. You are not alone on this journey.

The information contained in this summary is taken from the Introduction of the Violence Prevention Resource Guide for Parents by Peggy Patten and Anne S. Robertson (Champaign, IL: ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, 2001).

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