

WHAT YOU CAN DO
IF YOUR CHILD
HAS BEEN HURT

YOUTH VIOLENCE



WHAT IS YOUTH VIOLENCE?

Youth violence is defined as violent acts such as bullying, slapping, or hitting—which can cause more emotional harm than physical harm, and acts such as robbery and assault (with or without weapons) that can lead to arrest, serious injury, or even death. These harmful behaviors can start early and continue into young adulthood. The young person can be a victim, an offender, or a witness to the violence.

Youth violence is widespread in the United States. It is the third leading cause of death for young people between the ages of 15 and 24.¹ Those injured in a fight, robbery, or assault who require medical attention are six times more likely to get hurt again.²



WHO'S AT RISK FOR YOUTH VIOLENCE?³

There are several factors that can increase the risk of young people engaging in violence. However, the presence of these factors does not always mean that they will become an offender. Risk factors for youth violence often include but are not limited to:

- ✓ Prior history of violence
- ✓ Drug, alcohol, or tobacco use
- ✓ Association with delinquent peers
- ✓ Poor family functioning
- ✓ Poor grades in school
- ✓ Poverty in the community

WHAT YOU CAN SAY AND DO

- ✓ Talk with your child about the issue and the events that led up to it.
- ✓ Listen to the whole story; try not to interrupt, scold, or judge.
- ✓ Pay attention to how your child is feeling. Being threatened and/or hurt can be frightening and embarrassing.
- ✓ Find out what caused the fight. This may help avoid one in the future.
- ✓ If you are able, explore ways you can change your child's physical and social environment. For example, transferring them to a new class, school, or moving to a new neighborhood.



PREVENTION AND PROBLEM SOLVING

Here are a few conversation starters to assist your child in dealing with tough social situations and resolving problems they may face with their peers in non-violent ways.

WAS IT A FIGHT RESULTING FROM AN ARGUMENT OR INSULT? WAS IT REVENGE?

If so, ask the question:

- ✓ "What else could you have done besides fighting?"

Tell your child that it's more important to know how to walk away from a fight...Teach your child that that it's possible to stand up for yourself without fighting by taking steps to deescalate the situation before the fight starts.

Explain to your child that if they feel uncomfortable or too embarrassed to come to you, they can speak with an adult at school such as a teacher, principal, or coach, or someone that they are comfortable with in their community such as a youth or faith leader.

DID IT RESULT FROM BEING ROBBED OR GETTING JUMPED?⁴

Avoid blame; it was not your child's fault. Discuss how not to be in a similar situation in the future. If possible, encourage them to do the following:

- ✓ **Don't walk alone once the sun has gone down. Walk in groups whenever you can.**
- ✓ **Tell a family member or friend where you are going and your estimated time of arrival or return. That way, the police can be notified as quickly as possible if there is a problem.**
- ✓ **Stay in well-lit areas as much as possible. Avoid alleys, vacant lots, wooded areas, and other short-cuts or secluded areas.**
- ✓ **If someone is attempting to rob you, give up your belongings. It's not worth your life.**

Make sure that your child carries a cell phone, if age appropriate, and uses it if necessary.

FIND OUT IF THE PROBLEM HAS BEEN RESOLVED. IF NOT, WORK WITH YOUR CHILD TO FIND HELP.

The following questions can help lead you in the appropriate direction:

- ✓ **Are you still afraid?**
- ✓ **Are you thinking about getting even?**
- ✓ **Is the other person looking for revenge?**
- ✓ **Do you think talking with someone about this can help?**

If this is an ongoing issue or your child is being bullied, talk with others. This could be the doctor, nurse, or social worker caring for your child. You might also want to talk with someone at your child's school, the police, or other parents. Any of these people can help you think through a safety plan.



6 Steps to Preventing Youth Violence^s

1. Stop and count to 10 backward. This will help you take time out to think about your feelings before they get out of control.
2. If you are not able to control your anger, take a deep breath and walk away.
3. Think about the options and consequences of your actions. For example, hitting someone could result in suspension from school or serious injury requiring medical attention.
4. Cool off. Make sure you are calm and then talk to the person.
5. Be willing to admit and be responsible for something you may have done wrong.
6. Respond with your HEAD – not your fists, threats, or weapons.

FACTS about Youth Violence⁶

- Almost 16 million teens have witnessed some form of violent assault.
- About 1 in 8 people murdered in the United States each year are younger than 18 years of age.
- 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.



¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Webbased Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS) [online]. (2012) [cited 2014 Dec 17].

² Perron C et al. "Recurrence rate among pediatric patients with violence-related injury." Paper presented at Ambulatory Pediatrics Association, 1997; Washington D.C.

³ Adapted from www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention

⁴ Adapted from Metropolitan Police Department. Guarding against robbery and assault. www.mpd.cdc.gov.

⁵ Adapted from, Palo Alto Medical Foundation. Teens and Violence Prevention. 10 Steps for Your Teen to Avoid Violence/Injury. 2013.

⁶ Palo Alto Medical Foundation. Teens and Violence Prevention. Quick Facts. 2013.



DEVELOPING A SAFETY PLAN

A good safety plan helps you think through lifestyle changes that will help keep your child as safe as possible at school, at home and other places that they go on a daily basis.

- ✓ Remind them not to travel alone.
- ✓ Make sure they have the phone numbers of those who can help such as the police, the fire department, and other emergency response contacts.

SEEK SAFETY: IF THERE IS AN IMMEDIATE THREAT OF VIOLENCE

- ✓ Walk or run into a store. If you don't have a phone, ask to use one for an emergency and call home or the police. Ask for a ride.
- ✓ Go to a friend's home. Knock on the door and get inside quickly.
- ✓ Walk into the police or fire station or any other public building.



KEEPING AN ARGUMENT FROM TURNING INTO A FIGHT

When you resolve arguments or conflicts in a peaceful manner you will be teaching your child how to safely respond to violence. Here are some tips to share with your child:

- ✓ **Keep your temper. Avoid using insults – this will just make matters worse.**
- ✓ **Understand that the other person is just like you – a kid who just wants to be heard, who might not be looking for a fight but just wants to communicate some ideas or thoughts.**
- ✓ **Find out the reason for the argument. Try to resolve it without fighting.**



FINALLY

Let your child know: “Whatever the issue, it’s almost never worth fighting over and it’s okay to admit that the situation was intense.”

Children and teenagers hurt in a fight are much more likely to be injured in the future. Doctors, nurses, and social workers caring for your child are here to help. Let them know your concerns, and use this injury as an opportunity to prevent future – possibly more serious – injuries.

Children who are hurt in a fight or are threatened may hide it from their parents. They may feel too ashamed to talk about it.

LOUISIANA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE

1.888.411.1333

FREE • CONFIDENTIAL • 24 HOURS

*If you are in a violent relationship, help is available.
This is a free call to a domestic violence program
in your area of Louisiana.*



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