

Peace Begins at Home

Parents play a major role in lowering violence by raising their teens in safe and loving homes. With all the violence on TV, in our neighborhoods, and in schools, it is important that parents teach their teens non-violent ways to solve problems. Is your home a loving, supportive, and safe place for your teen?

- Are you able to keep your teen from seeing violence in your home or community?** - Do not allow family members to act violently in your home. Sometimes you can't stop your teen from seeing violence in the streets, at school or at home. Make sure your teen has someone to talk to about his or her feelings.
- What is your teen watching on TV, internet, in movies, and video games?** - Check out what your teen is watching and who they chat with on the internet. Help your teen choose shows, movies, games, and web sites that do not encourage violence or risky behaviors. Place TVs and computers in the living room rather than your teen's bedroom.
- Be aware of your own behavior.** - Be a good example for your teen. Youth often follow their parents' lead. Teach your teen values such as respect and honesty. When you are angry, do you yell or use physical force? Show your teen how to deal with conflicts in a peaceful way.
- Keep guns out of reach** - If you have a gun in your home, make sure that it is not loaded. Lock up the gun in one place and keep the extra bullets in another part of your home.
- Talk about bullies** - Bullying doesn't end in elementary school. Talk with your teen about how bullies can cause harm by using physical force or hurtful words. Teens may not realize they are being bullied or that they themselves are bullies.
- Talk about gangs** - Find out whether your teen is exposed to gangs. Keep in mind that teens in gangs tend to spend less time with adults, and have fewer positive adult role models.¹ It's important for your teen to have supportive and caring relationships with adults.
- Pay attention to your teen's actions toward others** - Always teach your teen to solve his or her problems without violence. Talk about the negative consequences of using violence. Encourage your teen to ask you for advice on how to solve conflicts without arguments or fights.
- Teach your teen ways to avoid danger** - Encourage your teen to get involved in school activities or after-school programs supervised by responsible adults. Make sure your teen chooses the safest routes when going to and from places or when taking public transportation.
- Get the schools involved** - Ask school staff to teach students how to solve problems without yelling, threatening, or fighting. Suggest having peer conflict management groups, community mediation centers, or anger management programs in the school. Do not accept violence, harassment, or bullying from or towards your teen.
- How do you show your teen love and support?** - Every teen needs love, trust and honesty in their home to feel safe and supported. Praise your teen when he/she does something well. As much as possible, let your teen know that you love him or her.

RESOURCES

- ♦ **Media Awareness Network:** www.media-awareness.ca/english/index.cfm. Website available in English and French.
- ♦ **National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center:** <http://safeyouth.org/scripts/parents/index.asp>. Articles available in English and Spanish.

Do you have any comments or questions about this handout? Please contact Adolescent Health Working Group by emailing feedback@ahwg.net or calling (415) 554-8429. Thank you.

Sources:

- 1) Children Now and the Kaiser Family Foundation. Talking with Kids about Tough Issues. <http://www.talkingwithkids.org/booklet.html>
- 2) American Academy of Pediatrics and American Psychological Association. Raising Children to Resist Violence. 1995, <http://helping.apa.org/articles/article.php?id=15>
- 3) Pratt H, Greydanus D. Adolescent Violence: Concepts for a New Millennium. *Adolescent Medicine*. 2000; 11: 103-25.