

PARENTS CAN PLAY A **HUGE** ROLE IN STOPPING VIOLENCE AT SCHOOLS

GET INVOLVED

Volunteer to spend some time on campus as a member of a parent patrol. As a volunteer, you could help patrol the school yard and blocks around the campus or greet and monitor visitors. Your presence could make a real difference in your child's life. Having parents on campus helps students develop strong adult role models, and it emphasizes the importance you place on education.

SCHOOLS NEED YOUR HELP

Work with the school to develop effective anti-violence programs and security measures. Meet with the principal and administration and get to know your local school board members. Find out what your district can do to make campuses safer. Become a part of the school's violence prevention task force. Discuss your views on security measures like metal detectors, surveillance cameras and school uniforms. Help your children's school create structured anti-violence programs like peer mediation, a self-esteem curriculum and character education.



RESOURCES

Centers for Disease Control

www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/schoolviolence/fastfact.html

World Health Organization

www.who.int/publications/i/item/school-based-violence-prevention-a-practical-handbook

>INFOCUS

**BREAK THE SILENCE
STOP THE
VIOLENCE**

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS



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OUR SCHOOLS HAVE A PROBLEM

School violence is a real problem in every school in America. If you've watched the news or been on social media, you know that it can happen anywhere at any time. The U.S. has had 2,032 school shootings since 1970 and these numbers are increasing. Nearly half of these have occurred since 2012. Since the historic attack at Columbine High School in 1999, nearly 300,000 students have been on campus during a school shooting. An estimated 4.6 million American children live in a home where at least one gun is kept loaded and unlocked.

HOW CAN YOU SPOT A POTENTIALLY VIOLENT STUDENT

Although many of the school shootings publicized in the news seem like random acts of violence, psychologists have found that the students involved shared some common characteristics. In most of the cases, other students knew that their classmates had problems, but they didn't tell anyone. There are definite warning signs to violence. Violence is often the result of serious psychological problems and abuse. Talk with your children about other students at school. Ask them if they have noticed any of these warning signs in their classmates.



A SAFE PLACE TO LEARN

Education has a transformative role in children's lives and in society as a whole. Children's learning experience should always be positive, and never traumatic. While every child should have the right to safety and security in the learning environment, an estimated 246 million kids experience violence around schools - on the way to school, on school grounds and within classrooms. Actions must be taken to curb the violence, whether it be participating in anti-violence coalitions, or writing to lawmakers.



SEVERE DEPRESSION

Violent students have difficulty dealing with the problems of everyday life. Often there are changes in their sleeping or eating habits. They might stop hanging around their friends. This depression can lead to thoughts of suicide. If your children know any students who talk about suicide, they must get them help. They are a threat to themselves, and they could be a threat to people at school. Suicidal thoughts often lead to acts of violence against other people.

OBSESSIONS WITH VIOLENCE AND WEAPONS

If your children know any students who are obsessed with violence or weapons, there could be a big problem. People who view a lot of violence on TV, in video games or in the movies may find it more and more difficult to separate the violence they watch from real violence. These students can begin to lose touch, and the consequences can be deadly.

LOW SELF-ESTEEM

Students who become violent may feel like they don't fit in. Most of the students involved in school shootings felt picked on or inferior - After years of teasing and abuse, they finally snapped. They used violence to get back at other students and to get noticed. Let your children know that teasing and abuse can cause serious problems

IRRESPONSIBILITY

Do your children know any students who can't take responsibility for their own actions? Violent people often try to blame others for things that are really their own fault. They find it difficult to function normally and hate rules.

CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Cruelty is one of the biggest warning signs. Ask your children to tell you about anyone who talks about committing cruel acts. If they know anyone who actually does cruel things, there's definitely a problem. Cruelty to animals can lead to violence toward people.



BEHAVIOR CHANGES

People who have extreme changes in behavior could become violent. Extreme mood swings are not normal. Anyone who has a problem with self-control may need help.

THREATS

Make sure your children take every threat of violence seriously. They should never assume that a threat is just a joke or meant to scare someone. Violent students often say that they're about to do something BIG, or that they're going to get everyone back. These threats need to be reported immediately.

ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILDREN TO SPEAK UP

If your children know students who show any of the warning signs of violence, they need to report them to someone at school. Talk with your children regularly about the things they see at school. Let them know that weapons and violence at school are unacceptable. Encourage them to have conversations with other adults. If your children feel comfortable talking with their school's teachers, counselors and principal, they are more likely to report any signs of violence they see.

If we really want to stop violence in schools, we have to get every member of the community involved. We have to make our schools safe again. No student can learn in an environment of fear.