

Raising a Non-Violent Child

If we want our children to be non-violent, we can not use violence to discipline them.

- Discipline means “to teach.” When we discipline our children we are turning their misbehavior into an opportunity to teach them how we want them to behave. To do this, we need to be clear how we want them to behave rather than just focusing on what we don’t want them to do.
- The ultimate goal of discipline is to teach our children self-discipline so that they can make good choices about how to behave.

1. Point out a way to be helpful—instead of scolding.

You can redirect a child’s energy by giving him a job—such as holding something at the store, or asking him to turn off the television.

2. Express disapproval without attacking the child personally.

You can let a child know your feelings without name calling.



3. State your expectations ahead of time.

Your child needs to know ahead of time what you expect. Be sure to keep expectations simple and specific. Telling a child you expect him to “be good” is too vague. Instead you could say, “Keep your hands to yourself in the store.”

4. Show your child how to make amends.

We can model for children how to apologize, and we can help them apologize when they have hurt someone.

5. Give choices.

Instead of telling children what not to do, you can give them choices about what they are allowed to do. Instead of saying, “No running!” you can say “These are the kinds of things you can do in the house: play games, draw, work on puzzles.”

6. Take action.

If your child will not leave something alone, you can remove it or the child from the situation.

Violence at Home

No one wins when there is violence at home.

Violence hurts the victim, the offender, the family, and the community.

- Domestic violence is any violence between family members.
- Domestic violence includes child abuse as well as spouse abuse. Child abuse includes physical and emotional abuse, as well as neglect.
- Domestic violence has serious, often life – long consequences for children.

Warning signs that a child has witnessed or experienced violence:

- The child is withdrawn, keeps to herself
- The child gets into many fights with peers
- The child expresses many feelings of guilt
- The child has low self-esteem, feels he is worthless, and that no one likes him
- The young child acts out violence in his play



Children who witness or experience violence are at risk for the following problems:

- poor impulse-control
- depression
- anxiety
- acting out with parents and siblings
- excessive fears
- suicide
- becoming a run away

Ways to break the cycle of violence:

- seek professional help to control anger
- identify trusted people you can ask for help
- take a parenting course
- build up your child's self-esteem
- communicate well with your children

Conflict Resolution

Teach your child to solve problems in a non-violent way.

- You do this by telling him how you want him to behave, and by showing him how you handle conflict.
- The key to conflict resolution is knowing that you have options to choose from. You can choose to do something else.

Adults often try to solve children's problems for them, rather than helping children learn how to solve their own problems.

- This is especially true when children are fighting with a sibling or other child. When a child tells us of a problem, we often respond with solutions—such as “Be nice to one another,” “You have to learn to share,” “Give him the toy, you’ve had it long enough,” or “If you can’t take turns, then the toy will be put away.”
- The problem with these kinds of responses is that they only offer short term solutions— and the solutions themselves are not coming from the child.

Here is a 4-step problem solving method you can use to teach your child to solve her own problems.

It will take time to teach this to your child, and you will have to let her make some mistakes. But it is through our mistakes that we learn.

1. Identify the problem.

Help your child state the problem. Avoid telling your child what you think the problem is. Instead, help her define the problem. Ask simple questions to help her talk about the problem.

2. Brainstorm and evaluate possible solutions.

Ask your child how she might solve the problem. Encourage her to come up with as many solutions as possible. You can even encourage her to be a bit silly. Once the list is completed, go over what might happen if she tried each solution. For example, what might happen if she just grabbed her toy back, if she offered to trade the toy, etc.

3. Choose a solution and try it.

Ask your child to pick one of her solutions and to try it. You can remind her that if it doesn't work, she still has other solutions to try.

4. Evaluate the outcome. Did it work?

- Ask your child whether the solution worked and how she knows this.
- If she is not happy with how things turned out, encourage her to try another one of the solutions from step 2. Or perhaps she now sees the problem differently, and needs to go back to step 1.

Parents are often surprised to hear the solutions their children come up with.

- Often they are the ones we would tell them!!
- When the solutions come from your child, however, she is learning she can handle her problems and she is more likely to stick with the solution.

TV Violence



Not everyone agrees that watching violence on television is bad for children. Many adults remember watching violent shows when they were children and believe that it did not harm them.



- The difference today, however, is that many more shows are geared toward children and they include more violence than the shows adults watched as children.
- In addition, children are encouraged to purchase items associated with the show (lunch boxes, sheets, cups, etc.). This means that children today spend more time exposed to violence when watching television and have constant reminders of the shows in their daily lives.
- Research has shown that some children are more aggressive after watching violent TV shows.

Watching television means your child is not doing other healthy things.

- When your child is watching TV, he is not reading, drawing, pretending, creating, studying, etc.

Some facts about TV violence

- There are about 32 acts of violence per hour on Saturday morning cartoons—compared to 5-6 violent acts on prime time TV.
- Preschoolers spend about 3½ hours a day watching television, and thus witness many violent acts—even when watching children’s shows.
- By 6th grade a child has seen about 8,000 murders and more than 100,000 acts of violence on television.

Effects of Watching TV Violence

- Children who watch a large number of violent programs are more likely to use aggression to resolve conflicts.
- Children who watch a large number of violent programs tend to have more fears than other children. Young children in particular develop fears because they have difficulty understanding the difference between real and pretend.
- Young children who watch a lot of television are less likely to play creatively, and their play is more likely to be violent.

What Parents Can Do

Know what shows your child is watching and whether violence is present.

- Decide what your child should be watching, and tell her why.
- Be clear about your family television watching rules. Experts recommend no more than one hour of television a day. Talk with your child about what he sees on television.
- Make sure he is getting the messages you want him to get from the show. For example, do you want him to learn that fighting is a good way to handle problems or that fighting is to be his last choice?

Here are some books you may want to read with your child:

Scholes, K. . Peace Begins With You, Sierra Club Books, 100 Bush St., San Francisco, CA

In simple terms, the author explains the concept of peace, why conflicts occur, how they can be resolved in positive ways, and how to protect peace.

Paris, S. . Mommy and Daddy Are Fighting, The Seal Press, 3131 Western Ave., Seattle, WA 98121-1028; 206-283-7844.

The parents in the story are living together, but the physical violence is escalating. Children who have witnessed violence between their parents will be able to relate to this story.

I hope this information will be useful to you.

Best wishes for a good month ahead!

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