

A Dozen Things Parents Can Do To Stop School Violence

1. Recognize that keeping firearms in your home may put you at legal risk as well as expose you and your family to physical risk. In many states, parents can be held liable for their children's actions, including inappropriate use of firearms. If you do choose to keep firearms at home, ensure that they are securely locked, that ammunition is locked and stored separately, and that children know weapons are never to be touched without your express permission and supervision.
2. Take an active role in your children's schools. Talk regularly with teachers and staff. Volunteer in the classroom or library, or in after-school activities. Work with parent-teacher-student organizations.
3. Act as role models. Settle your own conflicts peaceably and manage anger without violence.
4. Listen to and talk with your children regularly. Find out what they're thinking on all kinds of topics. Create an opportunity for two-way conversation, which may mean forgoing judgments or pronouncements. This kind of communication should be a daily habit, not a reaction to crisis.
5. Set clear limits on behaviors in advance. Discuss punishments and rewards in advance, too. Disciplining with framework and consistency helps teach self-discipline, a skill your children can use for the rest of their lives.
6. Communicate clearly on the violence issue. Explain that you don't accept and won't tolerate violent behavior. Discuss what violence is and is not. Answer questions thoughtfully. Listen to children's ideas and concerns. They may bring up small problems that can easily be solved now, problems that could become worse if allowed to fester.
7. Help your children learn how to examine and find solutions to problems. Kids who know how to approach a problem and resolve it effectively are less likely to be angry, frustrated, or violent. Take advantage of "teachable moments" to help your child understand and apply these and other skills.
8. Discourage name-calling and teasing. These behaviors often escalate into fistfights (or worse). Whether the teaser is violent or not, the victim may see violence as the only way to stop it.
9. Insist on knowing your children's friends, whereabouts, and activities. It's your right. Make your home an inviting and pleasant place for your children and their friends; it's easier to know what they're up to when they're around. Know how to spot signs of troubling behavior in kids—yours and others.
10. Work with other parents to develop standards for school related events, acceptable out-of-school activities and places, and required adult supervision. Support each other in enforcing these standards.
11. Make it clear that you support school policies and rules that help create and sustain a safe place for all students to learn. If your child feels a rule is wrong, discuss his or her reasons and what rule might work better.
12. Join up with other parents, through school and neighborhood associations, religious organizations, civic groups, and youth activity groups. Talk with each other about violence problems, concerns about youth in the community, sources of help to strengthen and sharpen parenting skills, and similar issues.

A Dozen Things Teachers Can Do To Stop School Violence

1. Report to the principal as quickly as possible any threats, signs of or discussions of weapons, signs of gang activity, or other conditions that might invite or encourage violence.
2. Set norms for behavior in your classroom. Refuse to permit violence. Ask students to help set penalties and enforce the rules.
3. Invite parents to talk with you about their children's progress and any concerns they have. Send home notes celebrating children's achievements.
4. Learn how to recognize the warning signs that a child might be headed for violence and know how to tap school resources to get appropriate help.
5. Encourage and sponsor student-led anti-violence activities and programs ranging from peer education, teen courts, and mediation to mentoring and training.
6. Offer to serve on a team or committee to develop and implement a Safe School Plan, including how teachers and other school staff should respond in emergencies.
7. Enforce school policies that seek to reduce the risk of violence. Take responsibility for areas outside as well as inside your classroom.
8. Insist that students not resort to name-calling or teasing. Encourage them to demonstrate the respect they expect. Involve them in developing standards of acceptable behavior.
9. Teach with enthusiasm. Students engaged in work that is challenging, informative, and rewarding are less likely to get into trouble.
10. Learn and teach conflict resolution and anger management skills. Help your students practice applying them in everyday life. Discuss them in the context of what you teach.
11. Incorporate discussions on violence and its prevention into the subject matter you teach whenever possible.
12. Encourage students to report crimes or activities that make them suspicious.

A Dozen Things Principals Can Do To Stop School Violence

1. Reward good behavior. Acknowledging students who do the right thing, whether it's settling an argument without violence or helping another student or apologizing for bumping into someone helps set the tone for the whole school.
2. Establish "zero tolerance" policies for weapons and violence. Spell out penalties in advance. Adopt the motto "If it's illegal outside school, it's illegal inside." Educate students, parents, and staff on policies and penalties. Include a way for students to report anonymously crime-related information that does not expose them to retaliation.
3. Establish a faculty-student-staff committee to develop a Safe School Plan. Invite law enforcement officers to be part of your team. Policies and procedures for both day-to-day operations and crisis handling should cover such subjects as identifying who belongs in the building, avoiding accidents and incidents in corridors and on school grounds, reporting weapons or concerns about them, working in partnership with police, and following up to ensure that troubled students get help.
4. Work with juvenile justice authorities and law enforcement officers on how violence, threats, potentially violent situations, and other crimes will be handled. Meet regularly to review problems and concerns. Develop a memorandum of understanding with law enforcement on access to the school building, reporting of crimes, arrests, and other key issues.
5. Offer training in anger management, stress relief, mediation, and related violence prevention skills to staff and teachers. Help them identify ways to pass these skills along to students. Make sure students are getting training.
6. Involve every group within the school community — faculty, professional staff, custodial staff, students, and others — in setting up solutions to violence. Keep lines of communication open to all kinds of student groups and cliques.
7. Develop ways to make it easier for parents to be involved in the lives of their students. Provide lists of volunteer opportunities; ask parents to organize phone trees; hold events on weekends as well as week nights. Offer child care for younger children.
8. Work with community groups and law enforcement to create safe corridors for travel to and from school; even older students will stay home rather than face a bully or some other threat of violence. Help with efforts to identify and eliminate neighborhood trouble spots.
9. Insist that your faculty and staff treat each other and students the way they want to be treated — with respect, courtesy, and thoughtfulness. Be the chief role model.
10. Develop and sustain a network with health care, mental health, counseling, and social work resources in your community. Make sure that teachers, counselors, coaches, and other adults in the school know how to connect a needy student with available resources.
11. Ensure that students learn violence prevention techniques throughout their school experience. Don't make it a one-time thing. Infuse the training into an array of subjects. Draw from established, tested curricula whenever possible.
12. Consider establishing such policies as mandatory storage of outerwear in lockers (to reduce chances of weapons concealment), mesh or clear backpacks and duffle bags (to increase visibility of contraband); and limited entry access to the building (to reduce the number of inappropriate visitors).

A Dozen Things Students Can Do To Stop School Violence

1. Refuse to bring a weapon to school, refuse to carry a weapon for someone else, and refuse to keep silent about those who carry weapons.
2. Report any crime immediately to school authorities or police.
3. Report suspicious behavior or talk by other students to a teacher or counselor at your school. You may save someone's life.
4. Learn how to manage your own anger effectively. Find out ways to settle arguments by talking it out, working it out, or walking away rather than fighting.
5. Help others settle disputes peaceably. Start or join a peer mediation program, in which trained students help classmates find ways to settle arguments without fists or weapons.
6. Set up a teen court, in which youths serve as judge, prosecutor, jury, and defense counsel. Courts can hear cases, make findings, and impose sentences, or they may establish sentences in cases where teens plead guilty. Teens feel more involved in the process than in an adult-run juvenile justice system.
7. Become a peer counselor, working with classmates who need support and help with problems.
8. Mentor a younger student. As a role model and friend, you can make it easier for a younger person to adjust to school and ask for help.
9. Start a school crime watch. Consider including a student patrol that helps keep an eye on corridors, parking lots, and groups, and a way for students to report concerns anonymously.
10. Ask each student activity or club to adopt an anti-violence theme. The newspaper could run how-to stories on violence prevention; the art club could illustrate the costs of violence. Career clubs could investigate how violence affects their occupational goals. Sports teams could address ways to reduce violence that's not part of the game plan.
11. Welcome new students and help them feel at home in your school. Introduce them to other students. Get to know at least one student unfamiliar to you each week.
12. Start (or sign up for) a "peace pledge" campaign, in which students promise to settle disagreements without violence, to reject weapons, and to work toward a safe campus for all. Try for 100 percent participation.