

Helping Your Child to Be Healthy & Safe

PARENTING GUIDE



Helping kids make the most out of life

www.HLOnline.org

We can't be with our children every moment of every day. Now, more than ever, the outside influences on children's lives are tremendous. From peer pressure to television, music, the Internet and social media, our children live in a dynamic information society that shapes their attitudes, knowledge and emotions.

It is easy to feel challenged as a parent, but the fact is you are still the most important and constant influence in your child's life. We believe this guide contains useful parenting tips to help children make positive, healthy choices.

About Us

Healthy Lifestyle Choices (HLC) is a nonprofit organization working to give children the knowledge and skills they need to reduce risk behaviors, including violence, substance abuse, accidental injury, poor nutrition and lack of regular physical activity. The HLC Program includes a behavioral-health curriculum in grades Pre-K to 8, a curriculum for after-school and/or summer camp programs, webisodes and many other resources.

For more information about Healthy Lifestyle Choices, visit our website at www.HLCOnline.org or call 504.299.1966.





Conflict Resolution & Violence Prevention

Everyone gets angry and everyone experiences conflict. It is **how** a person deals with conflict that makes a difference. One of the most common reasons for conflict is a breakdown in communication. That is why it is important to help your child learn to effectively communicate and positively deal with conflict. If two children are upset with each other, here are some simple steps to guide them through resolving their conflict:

- ❶ Help children to cool down if they are angry or frustrated (take deep breaths or a walk);
- ❷ Then, have each child take turns expressing their feelings without interruption;
- ❸ Next, ask each child to give an idea to solve the conflict;
- ❹ Finally, have children agree to a solution. (Children may agree to walk away and discuss the problem once they have calmed down.)

Where does violence begin?

Children are not naturally violent. Violence is a learned behavior that can be unlearned. In most cases, children learn how to respond to conflict at home, in school, from the media and their peers.

What can **YOU** as a parent do about violence?

Talk to your child often, starting at an early age. Parents have the power to help their children become healthy, confident and secure. This is done by teaching them how to express their emotions and opinions, view things from another person's point-of-view, resolve conflict peacefully and make positive decisions.

Controlling violence begins with discipline

Discipline is training that is expected to produce a specific pattern of behavior and produce moral and/or mental improvement. There is a dramatic difference between discipline

and punishment. Discipline is intended to teach children to understand why their behavior is unacceptable so they can make better decisions. It leads to self-control and shows that they are loved and respected.



Punishment is a penalty for wrongdoing and intended to stop an annoying behavior. It uses power to control behavior. With punishment, children become dependent on adults to control their behavior. It does not prepare children to make good decisions, but rather prepares children to obey orders.

Positive discipline

Parenting through positive discipline takes time. From the earliest age, set clear limits of what you expect and be consistent. Expect your child to obey your rules and praise them when they do. However, when children do not follow rules, here are four positive discipline strategies recommended by the *American Academy of Pediatrics*:

- **Natural consequences**—As long as it does not place your child in danger, let them experience the natural consequences of their actions. For example, if your child throws a cookie on the floor, it goes in the trash and they no longer have a cookie.
- **Logical consequences**—There may be times when you need to give your child a consequence if they do not follow your instructions. For example, if your child does not pick up his toys, you will put them away for the rest of the day. When you establish a consequence, make sure it is reasonable and always follow through.
- **Withholding privileges**—Explain to your child if they do not follow rules they will have to give up something they like. Choose something that is related to the misbehavior, however never take away something your child needs such as a meal. Timing is also important, especially for younger children. If your child is under the age of 7, make sure the consequence is immediate (instead of, for example, taking away something that evening).

- **Time-out**—This is a strategy best used for children who are ages 2-5. Determine which 2 or 3 behaviors merit a time-out and explain this to your child often. Choose a time-out spot that is boring with no distractions, such as a chair. If your child misbehaves, first give them a warning. If they continue to misbehave, explain what they did wrong as calmly as possible and take them by the hand or carry them to the time-out spot. Never react to tears, outbursts or promises.

Length of time is an important factor with this strategy. Time-out should last 1 minute for every year of your child's age (so a 2-year-old would be in time-out for 2 minutes, a 3-year-old for 3 minutes, etc.). When time is up, help your child return to where they were playing, reminding him or her that you love them.

Why spanking never works

Spanking, which is a punishment, is not an effective form of discipline for many reasons including:

- Spanking increases aggression and anger, instead of teaching responsibility.
- Spanking can get out of hand and harm the child.
- Parents who spank often regret their actions afterward.
- Spanking may seem to be effective at first, but loses its impact quickly.

In addition, studies now show that children who are spanked are more likely to become adults who are depressed, have more anger, hit their own children, hit spouses and engage in crime and violence.







Reduce violent reinforcements and images

The best way to send a message that you will not tolerate violence is to control your own behavior. Children will follow your lead. Never use physical force to control behavior or resolve conflict, always use words or one of the positive discipline techniques discussed above.

Other ways to reduce your child’s exposure to violence include:

- Supervise your child’s exposure to media.
 - Monitor the video games they play. Most games are rated and many contain extreme violence.
 - Monitor what they watch on television. A TV rating system was created to help parents determine what is appropriate for children at varying ages.



 TV Y is appropriate for all children	 TV PG means there may be content not suitable for young children
 TV 7 is approved for children ages seven and older	 TV 14 is recommended only for those ages 14 or older
 TV G is for a general audience and suitable for most children	 TV MA is for mature audiences over age 17

- Monitor their music. Most teens wear headphones when they listen to music, so it is important to check the lyrics of their favorite songs. Lyrics have become explicit in regard to sex, violence and drugs and may also promote violence.
- Establish rules about the Internet. Set up your computer in a family room or other open area where you are able to monitor the Internet sites they visit. You can even block access or set parental controls to sites that are not suitable for children.
- Monitor use of social networks and blog sites. Scan content to ensure that it is appropriate. Look for signs of and talk to your child about cyberbullying (posting cruel messages or images online). Explain that cyberbullying is harmful and unacceptable behavior.
- Use parental controls on mobile phones. Set parental controls to limit the ability to download applications or visit inappropriate websites.
- Talk to your child about cliques and gangs. Children want to

feel like they belong and are seeking support. Sometimes they are accepted by groups that engage in negative, antisocial behavior. If you suspect your child is involved in a gang, talk to them directly about it.

- Know your child's friends. Meet their friends' parents. Make sure your child is supervised when visiting friends.
- Supervise your child. Know where your older child is going at all times. Never leave young children unsupervised.

Using "I" messages when you communicate

Help your child understand that keeping sadness and anger inside can hurt them. Anger that is not expressed can become violent outbursts. Sadness that is not expressed can make children want to hurt themselves or take dangerous risks. "I" messages focus on feelings, needs and thoughts. When children and adults understand and use "I" messages, they can be aware of their own feelings and how these emotions impact their relationships with others. Help your child practice using "I" messages in this way:

"I feel _____ when _____ because _____."

Example: "I feel sad when you tease me about my height because it makes me feel different."

Help your child understand that they can prevent a conflict or hurt feelings by using "I" messages to express how they feel to others in a direct and positive way.

What can you do if your child is a bully?

If your child is acting like a bully and threatening other children, you must take action! Your child must understand that there are consequences for their actions. You must make it clear that you disapprove of bullying. It is important to impose consequences in a firm but loving way.

Consequences could include time-out or taking away of privileges for younger children. For older children, you could have your

child write down what happened, how they behaved, why it was wrong and how they can do better in the future.

With the increasing technology available to us, bullying has now spread from the playground to computers, cell phones and other electronic devices. Cyber bullying is the use of electronic devices to post words or images intended to harm another person. Explain to your children that cyber bullying is very serious and considered a crime in many states.

Some children are bullies because they are bored; others do it to feel powerful; some do it to get attention or feel popular. Whatever the reason, children must learn to control their impulses and behave in socially acceptable ways. Talk to your child and try to understand why they are acting aggressively. Then, explain that there are better ways to make friends and gain acceptance.

How to make friends

It can be difficult for youth to identify a good friend. Explain to your child that friends should make them feel good about themselves. Encourage your child to play with children who enjoy similar activities (play on the playground, skate, etc.). Help your child to recognize the qualities below in their friends and to practice these same qualities with others to be a good friend.

- Is a good listener
- Is honest
- Expresses their feelings
- Accepts others
- Shares
- Respects others
- Shows sympathy when needed
- Does not judge other people
- Helps another person when they are upset or in need
- Is at their best at all times
- Takes responsibility for their actions



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Lifestyle
Choices**

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