

MANAGING A VIOLENT CHILD

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The questions are, 'What makes kids violent and what can parents do about it?' Obviously, violence is the outcome of anger. Kids become angry for a slue of reasons including frustration, being physically or emotionally abused, being ignored, stressed, taunted or bullied or being treated unfairly by parents or others.

Anger is a legitimate emotion and can be channeled positively. It galvanizes people into action. Bono was so incensed by the terrible plight of African nations that he, together with Warren Buffet and Bill Gates, poured mega money into fighting disease and providing food and shelter. Victims have saved themselves by turning fear into anger and overpowering or escaping their predators. Unfortunately, in many cases, anger becomes destructive, causing people to become unforgiving, bitter, vengeful, and potentially violent.

So what do parents do to channel their kid's anger into a positive solution? Firstly, they must look at their own anger management and fix that by dealing with causes. Sometimes changing the circumstances will elevate or lessen the resulting negative outcome. In many cases, parents need professional counseling assistance. Without the tension in the home, kids can feel more relaxed and not be so easily riled. When kids negatively act out their anger, those causes need to be investigated and, if necessary, some counseling sought.

When kids become violent, it requires immediate attention. We have to get away from statements that start with, 'He/she made me...'. Individuals are responsible for their own behavior. We may think it is the church or school's responsibility to provide the necessary solutions to kids' violence. The church may provide youth groups with high-level activities to help kids expel their energy. They provide spiritual guidance to help kids make good choices. The church is not THE solution.

The school system gives kids an education. Guidance counselors deal with disciplinary problems, but only a percentage of kids will heed their warnings or advice. Schools should not tolerate violence and generally don't. Kids get arrested and sent to Juvenile Court, thus creating for themselves a criminal record. Schools are not THE solution.

Kids who are violent do not have many friends and those they do hang out with are usually violent, too. Parents need to watch carefully for the signs of violence in their kids and deal with it immediately it appears. It is not appropriate to make excuses for kids by saying, "He is only sticking up for himself." We need to get to the root causes and deal with those. If your kids are in a violent environment, then not only are they unsafe, but you are also. Violence by any person is never acceptable for any reason.

Here are some tips to alleviate child violence. Keep your kids busy and active. Monitor their friends. Get them into wholesome organizations. Don't let them constantly watch violent movies, TV programs or play violent video games. It desensitizes them to the horror of human destruction. Watch out for frustration, sudden changes in behavior or moodiness. Keep healthy communication with your kids so they will more likely tell you how they are feeling. Tell your child what they should do if ever another child hits them. NO, it is not appropriate to tell them to fight back unless they are in the street and they fear for their lives.

If your child is in a fight, intervene immediately. Who started it is not the issue. The issue is the response your child made and what they should have done instead. There are other options to fighting back. They can walk away, or call for help. They can tell the other person they are not going to fight. This is not wimpy behavior. We need our children to be able to manage negative emotions so they will be better prepared for the many frustrations of life that face us all.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.