

## Talking to Your Kids About Violence

Violence is becoming a fact of life for many children. Even in neighborhoods where violence is low, children should know how to respond to dangerous and potentially violent situations. Talk with your school age children about safe street behavior, focusing on the following common sense suggestions:

- Avoid dark, deserted, or dangerous streets-even if it means taking the long way around.
- Pay attention to what's going on around you. Walk away from possible danger, such as groups of older kids or adults behaving in a threatening or suspicious way. If you get scared, go into a store, restaurant, or gas station where other people are around.
- Let your parents, a trusted neighbor, or a police officer know about anything going on in your neighborhood that doesn't seem quite right.
- If you're mugged, give the mugger what's demanded. Don't fight back or talk to the mugger. Better to lose your possessions than your life. Report the incident to the police.
- If someone tries to hurt you or you think someone is going to hurt you, run away or scream to get attention. Shouting "Fire" helps to draw attention.
- Use a buddy system – go places with friends whenever possible.
- Always try to settle arguments with words, not fists or weapons. When someone you know tries to take advantage of you, stand up for your rights by saying "No" in a loud and firm voice. Report any threats or violence against you to a teacher, school administrator, or the police.

### Safety at Home

At home, encourage your children to keep doors and windows locked and to check to see who's there before opening the door. Set a good example by doing this yourself. Teach your children how and when to use 911 or your local emergency number. Practice making emergency calls with a make-believe phone.

### Listen to Your Children

Let your children know that they can talk to you about any fears they have. If your child is being seriously bullied or threatened at school, stand up for your child's safety by talking to school authorities about it. Although many children worry that "telling" on a bully will make things worse, bullies are more likely to leave your child alone if they know you will back your child up.

### A Violence-Free Attitude

Your attitude toward violence can affect the way your child responds to potentially violent situations. Do you believe that boys who do not fight are sissies? That it's important to win at all costs? That "nice guys" finish last? Or, do you let your children know that it's OK to walk away from a fight, and back your words up with your own actions?

Is your home a violence-free zone, where family problems are solved without using violence or threats? Do you help your child to learn nonviolent ways to deal with frustration, anger, and conflict?

Children who learn to handle conflict without using violence are much less likely to become victims of schoolyard or street violence.