

Lesson 4

Violence Prevention (Violence Prevention Profiler)



Key Terms

decision-point
prevention
violence

What You Will Learn to Do

- Apply strategies to prevent violence

Linked Core Abilities

- Do your share as a good citizen in your school, community, country, and the world
- Treat self and others with respect

Skills and Knowledge You Will Gain Along the Way

- Differentiate between violent and non-violent responses to anger
- Compare violence prevention techniques
- Select strategies for preventing violence
- Define the key words contained in this lesson

Introduction

The National Center for Education Statistics reports that approximately 37 percent of high school students have been in a physical fight within the year, and 18 percent of high school students have carried a weapon at least once within the past 30 days. These alarming statistics illustrate the fact that the instances of violence have become all too common in our schools. Safety has become a primary concern in what is supposed to be a nonthreatening learning environment.

In earlier lessons you learned processes for effectively managing conflict and negotiating a fair solution; however, what if the negotiation is unsuccessful, and you cannot reach an agreement to settle the conflict? What other steps can you take to prevent a conflict from escalating to violence? In this lesson you learn how you can take personal responsibility for violence **prevention**.

Key Note Term

prevention – to stop or prevent an event or act from occurring

Statistics Don't Lie

Youth violence is a widespread problem in the United States. Consider the following statistics:

- About 9 percent of murders in the United States were committed by youth under 18 in 2000. An estimated 1,561 youth under the age of 18 were arrested for homicide in 2000.
- Youth under 18 accounted for about 15 percent of violent crime arrests in 2001.
- One national survey found that for every teen arrested, at least 10 were engaged in violence that could have seriously injured or killed another person.
- About one in three high school students say they have been in a physical fight in the past year, and about one in eight of those students required medical attention for their injuries.
- More than 1 in 6 students in grades 6 to 10 say they are bullied sometimes, and more than 1 in 12 say they are bullied once a week or more.
- Suicide is the third leading cause of death among teenagers. In 2000, 1,921 young people ages 10 to 19 died by suicide in the United States.
- About 1 in 11 high school students say they have made a suicide attempt in the past year.

Do all you can to help prevent violence!

What You Can Do to Prevent Violence

Somewhere everyday, someone is dealing with violent behavior. Whether it's a child being bullied by a classmate or a shop owner being robbed at gunpoint, violent acts occur everywhere. Although **violence** has become more common in recent years, it is still an unacceptable way to resolve issues and problems.

Teenagers (see Figure 7.4.1) and young adults can play an important role in reducing and preventing violence. Consider some of the following ideas.

Key Note Term

violence – physical force used to do injury; any infringement of rights



Figure 7.4.1: When confronting a person about a problem, what steps can you take to negotiate a peaceful solution?

Courtesy of Bob Daemmrich/Stock Boston.

Start with Yourself

Try to broaden your social circle to include others who are different from you. Be mindful of your language and avoid stereotypical remarks and challenge those made by others. Speak out against jokes and slurs that target people or groups. Silence sends a message that you are in agreement. It is not enough to refuse to laugh.

Make a commitment not to contribute to violence in any way. Do not bully, tease, or spread negative gossip about others. Respect others and value differences. Try to broaden your social circle to include others who are different from you.

Understand Diverse Cultures, Traditions, and Lifestyles

Learning about others' cultures and traditions can help you be more compassionate and understanding. It can also help you better understand points of view that are different from your own. Talk with your friends, parents, and teachers about how you and your classmates can respond to hateful attitudes and behaviors. Newspapers, magazines, movies, and television shows that you've seen on these subjects can be great ways to start a discussion about hate crimes and intolerance.

Get Involved

Get involved in your school and community. Identify any hate group active in your community; then share the information by publishing an article in a school or local newspaper or talking to community groups or groups of students. Volunteer with a community group, play sports, write a play or poem, play a musical instrument, or join a club or after-school program.

Join a Group That Promotes Tolerance

Join with other students to create anti-hate policies and programs in your school. Coordinate an event that brings diverse people and groups together. Find ways to

show support and solidarity for groups when one of their members is a victim of hate violence.

Learn about effective programs and what other teens are doing around the nation. Find out how to plan and start a program, run a meeting, develop publications, and work with the news media.

Avoid Alcohol and Drugs

Stay away from alcohol and drugs as well as people who use them. There is a strong link between the use of alcohol and drugs and violence. For more information about drugs and alcohol abuse as well as their prevention and treatment, see the earlier lessons, “Use and Effects of Drugs, Alcohol, and Substances” and “Critical Decisions about Substances.”

Learn About Conflict Resolution

Many schools, churches, and after-school programs offer training in conflict-resolution skills. This training might include the following:

- **Learning about a win-win approach to resolution**
- **Turning problems into possibilities**
- **Becoming a more empathetic listener**
- **Practicing assertiveness, not aggressiveness**
- **Learning the art of negotiation**

Do Not Carry a Gun or Other Weapons and Avoid Those Who Do

Carrying a gun is unlikely to make you safer. Guns often escalate conflicts and increase the chances that you will be seriously harmed. If someone is threatening you and you feel that you are in serious danger, do not take matters into your own hands. Find an adult you can trust and discuss your fears or contact school administrators or the police. Take precautions for your safety, such as avoiding being alone and staying with a group of friends if possible (see figure 7.4.2).

Take the Pledge

You can take the Student Pledge Against Gun Violence and adhere to it to make your school and community safer.

I will never bring a gun to school;

I will never use a gun to settle a personal problem or dispute;

I will use my influence with my friends to keep them from using guns to settle disputes.

My individual choices and actions, when multiplied by those of young people throughout the country, will make a difference. Together, by honoring this pledge, we can reverse the violence and grow up in safety.



Figure 7.4.2: When walking through a deserted area, always walk with someone and be aware of your surroundings.

Courtesy of Ken Karp.

Most of us have learned from an early age that it is wrong to “tattle,” but in some instances it is the most courageous thing you can do. Tell a trusted adult, such as a teacher, guidance counselor, principal or parent. If you are afraid and believe that telling will put you in danger or lead to retaliation, find a way to anonymously contact the authorities. Before someone reaches a **decision-point** and performs a violent act that can change their life and the lives of those around them, tell someone who can help.

Take the Initiative to Make Your School and Community Safer

Join an existing group that is promoting nonviolence in your school or community or launch your own effort. The Justice Department’s youth Web site (<http://www.usdoj.gov/kidspage/>) can connect you with national organizations and provide you with information and resources to take action in your community. Learn about effective programs and what other teens are doing around the nation. Find out how to plan and start a program, run a meeting, develop publications, and work with the news media.

Conclusion

Although violence has always been a problem in the United States, the number of deaths and serious injuries increased dramatically during the late 1980s and the early 1990s as more and more youth began to carry guns and other weapons.

Key Note Term

decision-point – the point where a decision to act is made

Since then, however, the tide has begun to turn. Between 1992 and 2001, juvenile arrests on weapons charges dropped 35 percent; the juvenile arrest rate for murder fell 62 percent, dropping to its lowest level in more than two decades; and the juvenile arrest rate for violent crimes dropped by 21 percent. Clearly, considerable progress has been made, but youth violence does still remain a serious problem in the United States. With your help, however, these statistics can drop even lower.

This concludes Chapter 7, “Managing Conflict.” In the following chapter, “Career Planning,” you will learn how to explore career possibilities and opportunities and create a career development portfolio.

Lesson Review

1. **What ways can you get involved in your school or community to help prevent violence?**
2. **Why is it important to learn about other cultures and ethnicities in an effort to prevent violence?**
3. **How can the use of drugs and alcohol lead to violent acts?**
4. **Explain how bullying is considered violence.**