



Youth to Youth Violence:

A Guide for Parents

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“It’s hard for young people to find people to speak to about their problems.”

(McCreary Centre Society, 2009. p.29)

Did you know?



The effects of youth violence are many, and extend far beyond those who are victims and victimizers. Some of these effects include emotional and social harm in addition to the physical harm created by violence.

Although the number of youth participating in criminal activity is a small percentage of the total youth in the province, over the past decade, there has been an increase in violent acts and the level of violence among youth in the Lower Mainland (Tyakoff, 2006).

As parents with youth, it is our responsibility to educate ourselves about youth violence. This booklet is intended to provide information and resources to those who are parents.

In the past two decades, more than 100 youth were killed in the Lower Mainland as a result of criminal activity.

(Tyakoff, 2006)

In 2006, there were 590 350 individuals aged 15 to 25 living in British Columbia, which is approximately 15% of the total provincial population.

(Statistics Canada, 2006)

10% of male students reported having carried a weapon to school in the past month.

(McCreary Centre Society, 2009)

33% of male students and 15% of female students reported having been in a physical fight in the past year, with 4% of those requiring medical attention.

(McCreary Centre Society, 2009)

“Every year, approximately 1 in 10 youth comes into contact with the police for violations of the Criminal Code or other federal statutes.”

(Public Health Agency of Canada, 2005)

What is it?



Cyberbullying is a form of bullying that takes place using an electronic device or on the internet (Bullying.org, 2004).



Youth Violence is “intentional physical, sexual or psychological assault on another person (or persons) by one or more young people aged 12 to 19 years” (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2005).

Gang: A general term used to describe a group of individuals, who are involved in criminal activity. Despite common usage, the term gang, can actually refer to different levels of groups as follows:

1. A **group of friends**, is based on the sharing of common interests, and usually does not involve criminal activity. Youth should be encouraged to form positive groups of friends.
2. **Spontaneous criminal activity groups** (Gang Level I) are socially based and commit crimes based on convenience. Members often have other options and are less committed to the group than in other gang types.
3. **Purposive groups** (Gang Level II) have a specific criminal purpose and may come from within a larger group.
4. **Youth street gangs** (Gang Level III) commit crimes in order to profit. Members are hard core, highly visible and have openly identified themselves by name, common brands, specific colours, types of clothing, jewellery or tattoos.
5. **Structured criminal organizations** (Gang Level IV) tend to be highly organized networks that are run by adult criminals rather than youth.

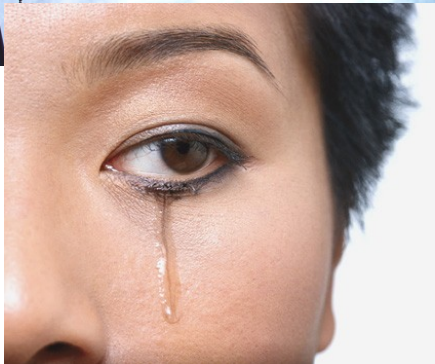
Did you know:

Youth are at greatest risk for violence after the regular school day.

(Striving to Reduce Youth Violence Everywhere, 2010)

(Mellor, MacRae, Pauls and Hornick, 2005)

Types of Violence



Physical: Purposely causing physical harm, which may include behaviours ranging from pushing or scratching up to murder. A weapon may or may not be used.

Emotional: Intentionally causing emotional harm, including threatening violence, ridiculing, racism, sexism, homophobia, and bullying.

Sexual: Unwanted or forced sexual contact, which may include verbal pressure, threats of physical force or actual physical force.

Contributors:

- ◆ Peer pressure
- ◆ Need for attention or respect
- ◆ Low self-worth
- ◆ Access to weapons

Why are youth violent?

While the causes of youth violence are many and complex, youth may act violently for one of the following reasons:

Expression: violent acts are used by some as a way to express feelings of anger or frustration, or as a way to regain control of their emotions.

Manipulation: violence is used as a tool to control others.

Retaliation: violence is a way of getting back at someone who has hurt the youth or someone he/she cares about.

Learned behaviour: violence is a learned behaviour. If a person has not learned how to cope with his/her emotions or stressful situations he/she may behave violently because he/she feels like there are no other options.

(Striving to Prevent Youth Violence Everywhere, 2010)

Cyberbullying

It can be a challenge for parents to deal with cyberbullying as it is difficult to keep up with technology and the ways in which it can be used to bully.

At present, cyberbullying happens via text message, email, instant messaging programs, social media sites (such as Facebook and Twitter), websites and blogs.

In addition to sending mean or threatening messages, bullies use technology to exclude, ridicule or rate others. The emotional impact of cyberbullying can be huge, which is why it is important for parents to talk about it with youth.

15 year-old boy from undisclosed location:

“Well, the only reason I bullied is because the same person I was doing it to, did it to me like a week before. It wasn't the right thing to do but at the time it felt like I was getting revenge.”

(Cyberbullying Research Center, 2010)

12 year-old girl from Michigan:

“The internet is supposed to be a place that is safe and fun for people, not a place to be criticized or harassed...One girl actually told me she would come and murder my parents and kill me personally. She made me cry so hard that I threw up. So, I know firsthand what its like to be bullied beyond your imagination.”

(Cyberbullying Research Center, 2010)

(Bullying.org, 2004)



Tech Tips for Parents

- ◆ Keep computers in a busy area at home
- ◆ Setup e-mail and chat accounts with your children
- ◆ Make sure you know your child's passwords
- ◆ Review your children's online accounts to ensure they have not included any personal information
- ◆ Review your child's buddy list and ask who buddies are
- ◆ Talk about cyberbullying regularly
- ◆ Tell your children that you won't blame them if they are cyberbullied as this is the main reason they don't tell adults
- ◆ Contact police if messages or websites are threatening



Risk Factors

Peer & Social

- ◆ Friends with behaviour problems
- ◆ Peer rejection
- ◆ Peer pressure
- ◆ Joining a gang
- ◆ Poor grades at school
- ◆ Dislikes school or skips classes
- ◆ Does not participate in conventional activities or sports

Individual

- ◆ Previous victim of violence
- ◆ Aggressive when young
- ◆ Poor behaviour control
- ◆ Attention deficits, hyperactivity or learning disorders
- ◆ High emotional distress
- ◆ Exposure to family violence
- ◆ Drug, alcohol or tobacco use
- ◆ Antisocial beliefs & attitudes
- ◆ Previous treatment for emotional problems

Family

- ◆ Poor family functioning
- ◆ Strict childrearing attitudes
- ◆ Harsh, lax or inconsistent discipline
- ◆ Low parent involvement
- ◆ Low child monitoring & supervision
- ◆ Low emotional attachment
- ◆ Low parent education
- ◆ Low family income
- ◆ Parent substance abuse
- ◆ Parent who is a criminal

Community

- ◆ Few job opportunities
- ◆ High number of poor residents
- ◆ High level of homelessness
- ◆ High level of broken families
- ◆ Low community participation
- ◆ Reduced sense of community

(Striving to Prevent Youth Violence Everywhere, 2010)

Protective Factors

Protective factors are those things in a youth's life that protect him or her from becoming involved in youth violence.

Helping youth to build upon protective factors can help even the most at risk children to overcome bad experiences and make health-

ier choices (McCreary Centre Society, 2009).

As a parent, you can assist your child to identify, and strengthen these factors in his/her life and your family.

When working on building protective factors, it is best to start with your child's strengths.

Family

- ◆ Family connection
- ◆ Parent involvement
- ◆ Positive environment
- ◆ Stable environment

Individual

- ◆ Ability to work through challenges
- ◆ Kindness toward others
- ◆ Has someone to talk to
- ◆ Positive sense of self
- ◆ Participation in sports or after-school activities
- ◆ Positive group of friends
- ◆ Academic achievement
- ◆ Emotionally stable
- ◆ Strong school, family & community connection

School & Community

- ◆ Accessible after-school activities
- ◆ Cultural connectedness
- ◆ Community connectedness
- ◆ Youth friendly programs
- ◆ Empowering & respectful toward youth
- ◆ Encourage youth involvement

(McCreary Centre Society, 2002)



"I don't have any health concerns, but I could talk to someone about how much I miss India."

(McCreary Centre Society, 2009. p.11)

What to look for..

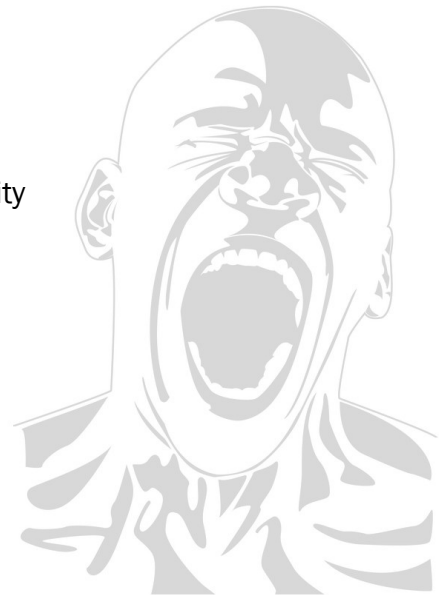


“I have considered suicide, because of all the bullying some people do to me.”

(McCreary Centre Society, 2009. p.28)

Although each youth is different, parents may notice the following if a youth is involved in or has been a victim of violence:

- ◆ A change in behaviour especially with violent or aggressive outbursts
- ◆ Injuries with no reasonable explanation
- ◆ Suicide attempts or threats
- ◆ Does not follow rules at home or school
- ◆ Disciplinary problems at home, school or in the community
- ◆ Bullying or intimidating others
- ◆ Isolating himself/herself from family
- ◆ Staying out late at night
- ◆ Unusual need for privacy
- ◆ Past violent behaviour
- ◆ Past destruction of property or vandalism
- ◆ Use of drugs and/or alcohol
- ◆ Recent experience of humiliation, shame, loss or rejection
- ◆ Themes of death repeatedly occur in conversation, artwork, writing or reading choices
- ◆ Preoccupation with themes/acts of violence in entertainment or internet sites visited



(Striving to Reduce Youth Violence Everywhere, 2010)

Did you know:

“Perpetrators are often younger, and violence is becoming more prevalent in elementary schools” (Public Safety Canada, 2002).

If you suspect...

Youth may not openly talk about having been a victim of or involved in youth violence.

Although a youth may not raise the topic, this does not mean that violence is not a concern for him or her.

If you suspect your child has been involved in or a victim of youth violence ask

them about it.

It is important for parents to recognize that youth are in a phase in their lives where they may not want to talk with their parents.

If this is the case, parents may consider having a trusted family member talk with their child.

“I didn’t think anyone would take me seriously.”

(McCreary Centre Society, 2009. p.17)



Tips for Talking to Youth

- ◆ Listen to what he/she has to say
- ◆ Be respectful
- ◆ Have a discussion
- ◆ When asking questions, avoid asking questions that can be answered with a yes or a no
- ◆ Avoid minimizing or dismissing your child’s concerns and/or opinions
- ◆ Give your child time to talk about what interests or concerns him/her
- ◆ Clarify anything you don’t understand or terms you don’t recognize
- ◆ Offer advice only when asked, and encourage your child to come up with solutions
- ◆ Avoid accusations
- ◆ Watch your assumptions
- ◆ Remain calm and avoid raising your voice

Talking to youth



In order for youth to share, they need to be in a place where they are comfortable and do not feel judged.

In addition to creating an environment in which youth are willing to talk, adults need to consider the developmental stage of the youth (see below) as it influences how he/she thinks and behaves.

Normal Developmental Characteristics of Youth:

- ◆ Friends become more important than family
- ◆ Sense of invincibility
- ◆ Need to create identity
- ◆ Need to assert independence from parents
- ◆ Need for privacy
- ◆ Exploring new beliefs & values



6 Things to Ask Yourself

- ◆ What are my beliefs about parenting a youth?
- ◆ What are my beliefs about the issues youth face?
- ◆ Are my beliefs and assumptions accurate?
- ◆ How can I change my views in order to better connect with my child?
- ◆ If I were a youth how would I want to be approached?
- ◆ Where can I get parenting support if I need it?



Strategies

When it comes to parenting youth who are involved in, victims of or at risk for youth violence, there is no one right answer.

Although strategies to deal with youth violence issues will be unique to the youth and family, the first step is taking the time to have a talk with your child.

When coming up with ideas about how to combat youth violence or improve protective factors, it is best to include the youth in the

planning.

Telling a youth what to do is not particularly helpful as it can lead the youth to rebel against advice and withdraw.

Creating successful strategies with youth requires 3 things:

1. Respect for individual differences
2. Supporting the youth's emerging independence
3. A focus on the person's strengths

In addition to the three

items listed above, successful strategies include flexibility in order to allow for adjustments as needed (Driessnack, 2006).

If you are struggling to communicate with your child, don't be afraid to access additional support or resources.

Additional resources are available on page 14 and in the grey boxes on this page and page 13. Contacting the counselling department of your child's school can also be helpful.

“I don't want to live with my family anymore because they don't know what my life is about and how much I hate it.”

(McCreary Centre Society, 2009. p.13)

Useful Information:

The following websites may be helpful resources for families:

- ◆ www.virsa.ca ~ Virsa offers information and programs geared toward families
- ◆ www.options.bc.ca ~ Options offers a variety of youth and family services
- ◆ www.pcrs.ca ~ Pacific Community Resources offers a variety of youth and family programs in the Lower Mainland
- ◆ www.touchfam.ca ~ Touchstone Family Association offers youth and family services in English, Mandarin and Cantonese

Prevention

Parents can greatly influence their child's chances of becoming involved in youth violence.

As a first line of defence, parents should focus on prevention strategies with their children. Prevention strategies can be helpful at any time, but are more useful the sooner they are applied.

In addition to violence specific prevention strategies, it is important that your child's overall health and well being are a priority.



Parents can:

- ◆ Be positive role models
- ◆ Spend quality time with your child
- ◆ Encourage youth to participate in sports or other activities
- ◆ Help your child to find and access services or youth programs
- ◆ Meet your child's friends
- ◆ Talk to your child about youth violence and gangs
- ◆ Help build protective factors (see p. 8)
- ◆ Educate themselves about youth violence and other issues facing youth
- ◆ Monitor computer and technology use

Useful Information:

The following websites may be helpful resources for information on prevention:

- ◆ www.mypolice.ca/children_and_youth/home.html ~ Canada's Police Information Portal
- ◆ www.psychosissucks.ca/epi/ ~ Fraser South Early Psychosis Intervention Program
- ◆ www.richmondaddictions.ca ~ Richmond Addictions Services
- ◆ www.cyberbullying.us/ ~ Cyberbullying Research Center
- ◆ www.bullying.org
- ◆ www.safeyouth.gov/Pages/Home.aspx ~ Striving to Reduce Violence Everywhere

Resources

Emergency Situations

- ◆ 9-1-1 (to call police, fire or ambulance)
- ◆ Kids Help Phone
 - ~ 1-800-668-6868
 - ~ www.kidshelpphone.ca
- ◆ Youth Against Violence Line
 - ~ 1-800-680-4264
 - ~ www.youthagainstviolenceline.com
- ◆ Covenant House (Vancouver)
 - ~ www.covenanthousebc.org/

Additional resources
can be found in the
grey boxes on pages
12 and 13.

Youth Services

- ◆ Watari Day Youth Program
 - ~ www.watari.org/
- ◆ Leave Out Violence (LOVE)
 - ~ www.leaveoutviolence.com/english/index.htm
- ◆ Broadway Youth Resource Centre (Vancouver)
 - ~ <http://broadwayyouthresourcecentre.org/>
- ◆ Little Black Book (youth services in Surrey, Langley, Delta)
 - ~ <http://www.cjibc.org/PDFs/LittleBlackBook4thEd.pdf>
- ◆ Urban Native Youth Association
 - ~ www.unya.bc.ca
- ◆ Onyx Voluntary Safe Care (for sexually exploited youth under 18)
 - ~ <http://www.fsgv.ca/programpages/youthservices/onyxvoluntarysafecare-directionsyouthservicescentre.html>
 - ~ 604-633-1472

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McCreary Centre Society (2009). A picture of health: Highlights from the 2008 BC adolescent health survey. Retrieved on January 24, 2010 from <http://www.mcs.bc.ca/pdf/AHS%20IV%20March%2030%20Final.pdf>.

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Statistics Canada (2006). *2006 Census: Demographics of British Columbia*. Retrieved on January 19, 2010 from <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/tbt/Rp-eng.cfm?TABID=1&LANG=E&APATH=3&DETAIL=0&DIM=0&FL=A&FREE=0&GC=0&GK=0&GRP=1&PID=88984&PRID=0&PTYPE=88971,97154&S=0&SHOWALL=0&SUB=0&Temporal=2006&THEME=66&VID=0&VNAMEE=&VNAMEF=>

Tyakoff, A. (2006). South Asian-based group crime in British Columbia: (1993 – 2003) Focus group report review of findings (Reference: SRA-787, pp.1-75). Gatineau, QC: Department of Canadian Heritage.

Websites Accessed:

Bullying.org: <http://www.bullying.org/>

Cyberbullying Research Center: <http://www.cyberbullying.us/shareyourstory.php>

Public Health Agency of Canada: http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfvvcnivf/familyviolence.html/nfntsyjviolence_e.html

Striving to Reduce Violence Everywhere: <http://www.safeyouth.gov/Pages/Home.aspx>

Project Gang Proof Gangs Fact Sheet: <http://www.gov.mb.ca/justice/safe/gangproof/factsheet.pdf>

References

Images retrieved from the following websites:

Page 2: <http://www.tri.org/public/images/stk88980cor.jpg>

Page 3: http://www.attainmagazine.co.uk/images/summer2008/photo_bullying.jpg

Page 4 Top Left: <http://dark.pozadia.org/wallpaper/Punk-Fist/>

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Page 5 Top: http://www.24sevincities.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/rainbow_flag_and_blue_skies.jpg

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Middle Right: http://padmahari.files.wordpress.com/2010/03/screaming_man.jpg

Page 10: <http://www.standtrue.com/pages/photos/images/day22.jpg>

Page 11 Top Right: http://compassionatesolutions.ca/compassion_in_action/wp-content/uploads/2009/04/j0439453-teens-talking.jpg

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Page 12: <http://educationcs.files.wordpress.com/2008/12/helping-hand.jpg>

References

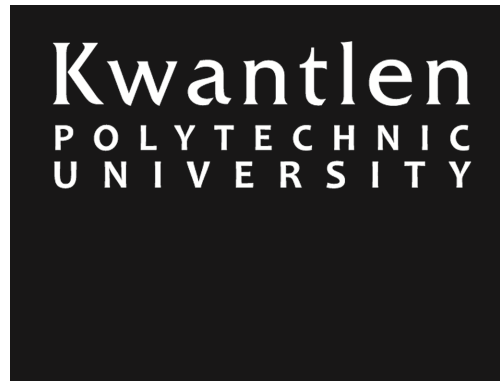
Images retrieved from the following websites continued:

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Page 17: http://www.google.ca/imgres?imgurl=http://www.medway.gov.uk/young_people.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.medway.gov.uk/index/learning/t4c/80216/t4c_february_2008.htm&usg=__almSdbQ8NzRhAip8iQW4QAYOAs=&h=300&w=300&sz=35&hl=en&start=20&tbnid=jYtOY4Lc8beLgM:&tbnh=149&tbnw=172&prev=/images%3Fq%3DYouth%2Bin%2Bcircle%26hl%3Den%26biw%3D1280%26bih%3D656%26gbv%3D2%26tbs%3Disch:10%2C456&itbs=1&iact=rc&dur=491&ei=Ea5QTM3yJlegsQPMzjbQAQ&page=2&ndsp=16&ved=1t:429,r:2,s:20&biw=1280&bih=656





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