



**Safe Neighborhoods, Safe Lives:
Things that Prevent or Reduce the Impact of Violence in the Community**
Experts' Tips for Preventing Violence from
the Philadelphia Collaborative Violence Prevention Center (PCVPC)
For more information go to <http://www.chop.edu/pcvpc>

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When violence is pervasive, people may feel powerless to stop it. But there is good news. It is preventable. There's a lot we know about how people and communities can make things safer. There are many ways we can reduce the likelihood that violence will happen, and there are many ways we can reduce its impact when it does occur. We can all help reduce the numbers of injuries and disabilities caused by violence in our communities.

Just as important, there are things we can do to reduce the emotional impact of violence on individuals to improve long-term health and mental well-being. Addressing the impact of violence can improve everyone's life. Safer communities are strong communities. When residents feel safe, they are more likely to lead a healthy life.

The tips below are based on expert opinion of what can work to prevent violence. Some tips relate directly to the risk of violence, focusing on things like weapons and conflict. For other tips the link to violence is less obvious, but we know that supporting healthy youth development and improving community environments are important tools for violence prevention. We also are beginning to understand how helping hurt people heal and young people cope with stress are just as important. Taken together, these tips provide each and every one of us with a powerful collection of prevention tools. We can all use them to add to the safety, and health of our neighbors, family and friends.



PREVENTION IS POSSIBLE/COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION

1. **Young people have a lot to offer if you let them:** Help connect them to businesses and organizations that will value their energy, vision, and potential.
2. **Violence prevention needs more than quick fixes:** Connect with people and programs in your community to make a difference. Go to www.safeyouth.org or call 1-888-570-BLUE and visit www.PHILLYBLUEPRINT.com. Even small steps can be rewarding, and a safer community will make life a little easier.
3. **Being hurt can lead to later violence:** Work with friends, law enforcement, health care workers, schools, employers, and court systems to help young people recover emotionally as well as physically.
4. **Know your neighbors:** Teach your children a sense of community by getting to know your neighbors, joining activities, and working with others to keep your neighborhood safe. Neighbors who know and look out for each other are among the strongest features of safer neighborhoods.
5. **Use the wisdom in your community:** Is there someone who does well, even in the face of violence or troubles? Or is there someone who knows where to turn to really get things done? Find your local "in the know" experts to help you solve problems.

PROMOTING COMMUNITY SAFETY

6. **Keep guns out of the hands of youth:** It is safer for them and for the community. Most youth in trouble got their first guns from family or friends. Talk to other adults and agree that guns should never be given to youth.
7. **Talk to your kids about guns. Don't let them carry a gun:** Appearing more dangerous to others actually increases the chance of being severely hurt or killed. Work together to make plans to be safer, not to get caught up in trouble, and how to get out of risky situations.



8. **Don't buy, hold, or carry guns for friends:** Not only does this help violent criminals; it's also dangerous and a crime with hard time.
9. **Take guns out of your house, and if you feel you must keep a gun, keep it locked and unloaded.** Guns are magnets for children, so hiding or forbidding them from touching them doesn't work. Guns are also magnets for thieves. Work with neighbors to ask everyone to store them safely.
10. **Speak up:** Let police, prosecutors, clerks, and judges know that you are concerned about guns. Show up at sentencing. Let them know that even "small" gun crimes affect your daily life and that you expect them to focus on gun violence and other violent crimes.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

11. **Give a young person your time:** This is the most valuable thing you can offer to them, to your community and to the future.
12. **Focus on what you can change, not what you can't:** Be active in solving problems and move through what is beyond your control. Talk to others about how to do this in your everyday life.
13. **Provide opportunities for young people to get involved:** Adults -- Be a mentor for a young person and show him or her how to become a leader. Include youth in every aspect of community planning and implementation. Young people -- Join your neighborhood boards; they need your advice.
14. **Good friends matter:** Young people -- Hang out with friends who are doing good things in school, in the community, and for their families. Know who you are hanging out with, what they are doing, and where they are going. Adults -- Know these things about the people in your children's lives.
15. **Make room for sports and active play:** Sports can be a healthy outlet for excess energy, taking the place of hanging out with troubled peers, and offer healthy role models through coaches.



16. **Skills, knowledge, and resources are important for young people:** Help them develop good health habits, life skills, and self-esteem that can last into adulthood.
17. **Expect and respect:** All young people in every community need to be held to high expectations because they live up or down to those expectations.
18. **Understand the different needs and interests of youth:** Programs in the community for sports, music, art, and academics can meet different needs. Not all programs work for all young people.

EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

19. **Expect Respect:** Abuse is never your fault and is not okay, no matter what a boyfriend or girlfriend might say. Talk to an adult you trust. You need someone to confide in to look out for you with your safety in mind.
20. **Young people still need support after violence happens:** Be there for them, spend more time with them, and listen if they want to talk about their feelings or worries.
21. **Learn how children are hurt by violence:** Injury is not just physical, so give them a safe place to talk about how they feel, not just once but many times. If you see changes in eating, sleeping, energy, acting out, or seeming sad, get help from their school counselor, minister, doctor, or nurse practitioner.
22. **Feeling nervous, scared, or worried after being hurt or seeing violence is a normal reaction:** Seek help and have your child talk with a counselor or doctor if these feelings don't go away after a few weeks.
23. **If your child is injured, it also affects you:** Take time to deal with your own feelings and turn to your family, friends, or clergy to talk about your concerns and to get a little more support.
24. **Living with violence is very unhealthy and makes people more scared and anxious:** Even finding little ways to reduce everyday stress and to make things safer can make a difference.



25. **Scared straight programs can hurt young people who are dealing with violence in their lives:** A better way is to make sure young people can connect with at least one caring adult who can help them expect, do, and be better.
26. **Holding a grudge hurts you:** If you have been hurt, being able to forgive wrongs, no matter how small, can help end a cycle of anger. Start small and help children (and adults) practice this.
27. **You have the power:** Promote positive thinking by reminding yourself of three good things every day. Do it at night, or make it a family tradition at dinnertime.
28. **When you're threatened:** Stay calm; do not let others see that you are upset. Afterwards, talk to adults you can trust.
29. **Practice ways to calm down before you are in a conflict:** Stop, take a breath, and tell yourself: "Calm down" or "It's not worth letting him or her get to me."
30. **Know yourself:** Avoid things that might make you angry if you are hungry, tired, rushed, or stressed.
31. **Know you:** Learn to recognize how anger feels to you before it grows out of control.
32. **Don't Assume:** Is someone really angry? Maybe he or she is scared or sad. Being able to correctly identify how someone else is feeling can often prevent arguments or confrontations.
33. **Shake it off:** When you are stressed, feeling angry, or anxious, your body builds up too much energy. Stretch, laugh, walk, run, or take a time out to let off steam. Adults - understand when young people need to be active and build this into their day.
34. **Practice optimism:** In neighborhoods with lots of violence, it can take a little work. But, being able to see the good things in yourself and others will make it easier to cope with troubles.



35. Humor and laughter make life easier: Humor can help you overcome bad times, get over angry feelings, and diffuse a tense situation. Think or say something funny but don't make fun of the other person.

CARING FOR OTHERS AND ABOUT OTHERS

36. Be a positive role model. Children and youth learn by your example, not just by what you tell them. Be fair and respectful in all that you do.

37. It's basic--treat others well: A strong moral compass and caring about others not only makes people happier, but also makes it easier to weather bad times. Help young people learn to live by principles of fairness and respect.

38. Hope, excitement, and teamwork are important for young people: Encourage these strengths in school, at home, and in the community to help young people succeed in their goals. Get involved in your child's schooling or in community opportunities for youth.

39. Spend time with children and youth and listen with your ears and your heart: Find ways to eat together, play together, and celebrate together. Read to young children and help them read to you.

40. Learn and practice listening with your eyes, ears, and heart: Children need you to hear what they are saying as well as what they can't say right away. They know if you are paying attention. Show you care by really listening, and then listen some more.

41. Know where your child is: Take an active role in your child's life, knowing where he or she "hangs out" and with whom.

42. Fight truancy: If school seems painful or unpleasant for a child, find out why and figure out ways to help. Ask for assistance from the school. If that doesn't work, find someone to help you make a plan.



43. **Lend a hand to new parents:** Reduce their stress and help them cope better by giving them a little breathing room. It will make it easier for them to give the attention, affection, rewards, and limits that all children need.
44. **Start or join a parents' support group.** In stressed communities, helping new parents is a good investment. Parenting can be overwhelming; at times having someone to talk to and learn from can make all the difference.
45. **Praise children for good behavior and set clear rules and limits.** Be sure they understand the reason for the rule and let them help decide on consequences.
46. **Know the normal activities and behaviors of your child:** If you should see a change in behavior, from subtle to dramatic, pay more attention, listen, and if necessary, get help.
47. **Listen to your child:** If a child is bullied or threatened, take him or her seriously. Stay calm, listen, and be reassuring. Show that you will help by modeling appropriate and thoughtful responses.
48. **Stress non-violent behavior at home, at school, and on the playground:** Remind young people and adults that name-calling or making threats is not acceptable. Adults -- Remember that children will do as you do.
49. **Have a plan:** If your child is bullied or hurt, talk with other people involved in his or her life, such as school personnel and other parents to set up a plan. *Get involved!!*
50. **Beware of television:** Television can promote violence. Limit TV time and violent content. Watch your children's favorite shows with them and talk about their content.
51. **Be aware of the impact of violence:** A change of eating or sleeping patterns, avoiding school, headaches or stomachaches, acting out, or being withdrawn are signs that your child has been hurt or is worried about being bullied or hurt. Talk and listen.



ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

52. **Light up the neighborhood. In any neighborhood, some places and times of night are riskier than others:** Work with neighbors to make these areas less risky. Install compact fluorescent bulbs in your outside lights so that you can keep them on all night. Encourage your neighbors to do the same.
53. **Make art and beauty, not graffiti:** Graffiti is a sign to criminals that they can get away with murder. When you see graffiti on public or private property call the Philadelphia Anti-Graffiti Network at (215) 686-0000 for the City to remove reported graffiti within 10 days. Want to express yourself? Call the Mural Arts Program at 215-685-0750.
54. **Need help?** Ask the City for the services that you or your neighborhood need to stay safe, clean, and healthy: Go to www.phila.gov or call 215-686-1776 to connect to the right city services. If that doesn't work, turn to the people-in-the-know in your neighborhood for help.
55. **Bash the trash. Keep your neighborhood clean:** Trash on your street is a sign for criminals. Take your trash out at the right times on the right days. Secure your trash to prevent it from spilling into the street. If you see someone illegally dumping or not taking care of their trash, call the Sweep Officers at 215-685-4275.