

# Family and Relationships

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## Potential Warning Signs for Violence in Children

Parents whose children show the signs listed below should discuss their concerns with a psychologist, who will help them understand the children and suggest ways to prevent violent behavior.

### Warning Signs in the Toddler and Preschool Child:

- Has many temper tantrums in a single day or several lasting more than 15 minutes, and often cannot be calmed by parents, family members, or other caregivers;
- Has many aggressive outbursts, often for no reason;
- Is extremely active, impulsive, and fearless;
- Consistently refuses to follow directions and listen to adults;
- Does not seem attached to parents; for example, does not touch, look for, or return to parents in strange places;
- Frequently watches violence on television, engages in play that has violent themes, or is cruel toward other children.

### Warning Signs in the School-Aged Child:

- Has trouble paying attention and concentrating;
- Often disrupts classroom activities;
- Does poorly in school;
- Frequently gets into fights with other children in school;
- Reacts to disappointments, criticism, or teasing with extreme and intense anger, blame, or revenge;
- Watches many violent television shows and movies or plays a lot of violent video games;
- Has few friends, and is often rejected by other children because of his or her behavior;
- Makes friends with other children known to be unruly or aggressive;
- Consistently does not listen to adults;
- Is not sensitive to the feelings of others;
- Is cruel or violent toward pets or other animals;
- Is easily frustrated.

### Warning Signs in the Preteen or Teenage Adolescent:

- Consistently does not listen to authority figures;
- Pays no attention to the feelings or rights of others;

- Mistreats people and seems to rely on physical violence or threats of violence to solve problems;
- Often expresses the feeling that life has treated him or her unfairly;
- Does poorly in school and often skips class;
- Misses school frequently for no identifiable reason;
- Gets suspended from or drops out of school;
- Joins a gang, gets involved in fighting, stealing, or destroying property;
- Drinks alcohol and/or uses inhalants or drugs.

*This material was excerpted from the brochure, "Raising Children to Resist Violence: What You Can Do." Copyright 1996 [American Psychological Association](#), American Academy of Pediatrics. All Rights Reserved.*

*Full text copies of the brochure are available by contacting the American Academy of Pediatrics, 141 Northwest Point Blvd., PO Box 927, Elk Grove Village, IL 60009-0927.*