

# TEEN VIOLENCE

RISK FACTORS & WHAT TO DO



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# Introduction

Is your teen becoming increasingly angry? Do they struggle in coping with their emotions? Do they act out physically in rage, [anger](#), or distress? If so, your teen may be at risk for exhibiting violent behavior. If your teen is angry it is important for them to develop skills to deal constructively with their feelings.

Has your teen acted out and put themselves or others in harm's way? This is a scary time for your family. You may feel like your world is crashing down. But there is hope for you and your teen.

## What is Teen Violence?

Teen violence refers to the dangerous or destructive behavior your teen exhibits. This can begin early in their life and continue on into adulthood.

If your teen exhibits violent behavior now, it is important to seek professional assistance for your teen. These actions can go on to define the character of your child, and can seriously affect their future.

Violence in teens can manifest itself in a variety of ways. Teens may express violence through:

- [Bullying](#)
- Fighting (Includes: punching, kicking, slapping, hitting, etc.)
- Use of Weapons

Teen violence can include emotional or physical violence, or a combination of both.

## Why do Teens Become Violent?

There are many factors involved in behavior development that may provoke violent behavior. Many theories exist as to why teens express their anger through violence. Some theories, according to both [TeenHelp.com](#) and [At-Risk.org](#) on why your teen may be acting out, include:

- **Modeling Violent Behavior:** This behavior could be found at home, in movies, in video games, or in public life.
- **Bullying:** Teens who are bullied, either physically or emotionally, may become enraged and seek revenge.
- **Frustration due to Disorders:** Teens with learning disorders, emotional distress, or attention deficits can lash out in anger at their frustrations. In some cases, these teens do not know how to use healthy coping mechanisms; instead, they channel their frustrations about their condition in an unhealthy way. This can result in anger and violence as a form of release.
- **Depression:** [Depression](#) can also manifest itself during the teenage years. Some teens channel depression into anger and aggression.
- **Drugs and Alcohol:** The use of [drugs](#) and [alcohol](#) can impair your teen's cognitive abilities and reasoning. Teens who consume these substances can become unaware of their actions

and the consequences for doing them. Because of this, violent acts may seem like a “good idea” or “natural reaction” while in an inhibited state.

- **Gangs:** If your teen is involved in a violent gang, then it is very likely that violence will be a behavior they exhibit. The longer your teen is involved, the more violent they are likely to become. It is very important that your teen be removed from this environment immediately.

## Does My Teen Have a Higher Chance of Becoming Violent?

For many individuals, a fleeting thought of violence is normal. However, there are factors which contribute to the likelihood of a teen acting out in a violent manner. These factors include:

- **Dwelling on Violent Thoughts:** Does your teen actively entertain thoughts of violence? Harboring these thoughts and allowing them to be an active part of their lives can be extremely dangerous. It is essential to encourage your teen to take those thoughts captive on a daily basis and to deal with them in a healthy and constructive manner.
- **Having Access to Tools of Violence:** When a teen has access to tools that can aid in a violent act, the chances of that plan taking fruition increase. These tools can include weapons such as guns, knives or objects of brute force (like clubs or bats).

Humans are complex. Because of this, there can be a variety of any number of frustrators or triggers for violent behavior. Many professionals seek to identify risk factors in individuals in order to determine the likelihood of them expressing anger or frustration through violence.

## Risk Factors for Teen Violence

The [Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) cite a variety of risk factors involved in teen and youth violence. These risk factors include individual risk factors, family risk factors, peer and social risk factors, and community risk factors.

### Individual Risk Factors:

- History of violent victimization
- Attention deficits, hyperactivity or learning disorders
- History of early aggressive behavior
- Involvement with drugs, alcohol or tobacco
- Low IQ
- Poor behavioral control
- Deficits in social cognitive or information-processing abilities

- High emotional distress
- History of treatment for emotional problems
- Antisocial beliefs and attitudes
- Exposure to violence and conflict in the family

## **Family Risk Factors:**

- Authoritarian child rearing attitudes
- Harsh, lax or inconsistent disciplinary practices
- Low parental involvement
- Low emotional attachment to parents or caregivers
- Low parental education and income
- Parental substance abuse or criminality
- Poor family functioning
- Poor monitoring and supervision of children

## **Peer & Social Risk Factors:**

- Association with delinquent peers
- Involvement in gangs
- Social rejection by peers
- Lack of involvement in conventional activities
- Poor academic performance
- Low commitment and failure in school

## **Community Risk Factors:**

- Diminished economic opportunities
- High concentrations of poor residents
- High level of transiency
- High level of family disruption
- Low levels of community participation
- Socially disorganized neighborhoods

## **Will my Teen's Anger Lead to Violence?**

In today's culture violence is becoming more and more of a prevalent issue, particularly among young people. If your teen exhibits signs of anger, depression, excessive frustrations and violent tendencies we recommend that you seek assistance for your teen. Catching violent tendencies early and stopping them in their tracks will allow you to help put your teen back on the right path to a healthy and successful life.

# Teen Violence Prevention

Can teen violence be prevented? There are some ways that you can encourage healthy coping mechanisms and positive attitudes in your teen.

- **Create a Safe Harbor:** It is important for you and your family to set the example for your teen. By not allowing or exhibiting violent actions in the home, it shows your teen that these actions are not acceptable, nor a necessary response to frustrations. By treating each other respectfully and with love, your teen will develop positive attitudes and patterns of behavior.
- **Encourage Communication:** One of the best things you can do for your teen is maintain an open line of communication. Let your teen know that you understand that they are oftentimes surrounded by violence and temptations, but offer an alternative.
- **Show Support:** Ensure that your teen knows that you are available when they need you. Let them know that you are their support system, and you can be trusted to have their best interest in mind.
- **Be Actively Involved in Your Teen's Life:** When you are a constant part of your teen's life, you will have a more thorough picture of the stresses and frustrations that occur. You will also be able to notice odd behavior, mood swings or shifts, and other abnormalities that may occur.

## What if My Teen is Already Violent?

You've tried talking to your teen, but they just won't connect. They've shut you out of their lives. They slam the door when they get home. You feel like you've already lost them. But there's hope! Shepherds Hill Academy has actively served teens with anger issues for decades, and we are here to serve your family.

Shepherds Hill Academy is a [Wilderness Therapeutic Boarding School](#) designed to get your child back on track. We specialize in behavioral and emotional disorders, offering [counseling and therapy](#) to your son or daughter. Individualized, group, and equine therapy sessions are all part of our one-year intensive therapeutic program.

To learn more about how Shepherds Hill Academy can help your teen and bring them back to your family, please call us at: 706-779-5766. Or, [inquire online](#) today!

## Resources:

- At-Risk.org Staff, January 31, 2014. Web. May 24, 2017, *At-Risk*, Retrieved from: <http://at-risk.org/teen-violence/>
- What Causes Teen Violence, Jan. 05, 2016. Web. May 24, 2017, *Teen Help*, Retrieved from: <https://www.teenhelp.com/violence-anger/what-causes-teen-violence/>
- Youth Violence, May 11, 2016. Web. May 24, 2017, *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/index.html>