

## **Raising Safe, Confident, Nonviolent Children**

*Adapted from Connie Miller, Retired Professional School Counselor*

*In today's violent society, it has become a priority of parents and guardians to protect their children and to raise them to solve the problems of violence. As the creator of T.A.S.K. (Taking Action for Safe Children), I hope parents will find some of the following suggestions helpful.*

### **SAFETY: DO**

- Instill an awareness of and a need to be cautious around strangers in your children. A healthy fear of anything harmful, such as a hot stove, busy intersection or interacting with strangers, will cause children to practice caution.
- Empower your child to say "NO" to any adult. Asking children to interact with a relative or adult friend who makes them feel uncomfortable or frightened sends a clear message to them that any adult has the right to make them feel that way.
- Encourage your children to tell you about any time an adult frightens them or makes them feel uncomfortable. Ask them never to keep secrets from you. Listen to their concerns.
- Be certain your child is supervised by an adult you trust at all times.
- Encourage older children to walk away from violent confrontations. Be certain they understand that walking away is not cowardly, but means they are learning to handle potentially dangerous situations in a mature manner.
- Insist that your child inform you about his or her whereabouts at all times.
- Know whom your child considers to be a friend.

### **SAFETY: DON'T**

- Never insist that your children hug or kiss a relative or friend when they don't wish to do

so.

- Don't tell your child that a stranger will look different or odd.
- Never allow your child too much freedom without supervision.
- Never encourage them to physically or verbally harm someone or something.
- Never ask them to do tasks beyond their age capability. For example, six-year-olds are too young to use a power lawn mower.
- Refusing to trust your instincts or gut feelings as a parent can cause you to fail to react in your child's best interest. If you feel your child is in an unsafe situation, do something about it immediately.

### **NONVIOLENCE: DO**

- Teach your child that feeling anger is okay and that there are appropriate ways of expressing or venting anger, such as drawing pictures, talking about the situation, taking a cool-off period, hitting a pillow, or exercising.
- Provide a suitable family forum to discuss disagreements between siblings.
- Establish clear, reasonable family rules and be consistent in their enforcement.
- Seek assistance if you feel your child's behavior is developing into a problem.
- Turn off the television, or at least monitor your child's television viewing, computer usage, video game selections, etc.
- Model nonviolent behavior by refusing to

participate in arguments or nonproductive disagreements.

- Tell your child “NO”. Giving them everything they ask for will develop your child into a self-centered individual who will not consider the rights of others.
- Question your children about their friends or acquaintances. It is okay for parents to be cautious about and even disapprove of their child’s choice of friends.
- Don’t push for perfection, but do expect success from your children. If you don’t expect anything from them, they will not develop a positive self-esteem or believe themselves to be capable of success.
- Encourage your children to show compassion toward other people and all living beings.

#### **NONVIOLENCE: DON’T**

- Don’t let your child take out angry feelings on another person or animal. Teach them that hurting others is not allowed.
- Never support your child’s misbehavior at home or at school. Never reward bad behavior by giving them what they want when they misbehave.
- Don’t take out your anger on your child.
- Don’t encourage your children to defend themselves with verbal or physical violence. The use of physical or verbal violence against another person is not a defense, but an attack. Better ways to solve problems

can be learned and implemented with encouragement from you.

#### **CONFIDENCE BUILDING: THINGS TO DO**

- Model how to develop positive relationships with others (adults and children).
- Expect your child to set goals for success in life and make these expectations known to your child. For example: “I expect you to go to college, get some other type of post-secondary training or find a job after high school.” “I want you to grow up and do something you enjoy.”
- Understand your child’s needs, interests, and talents.
- Get involved with your children’s school. Take an interest in their education.
- Increase your own education to a higher level and make it known to your child that learning never stops.
- Encourage your children with positive statements to increase their self-esteem.

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