

Are you tired of the violence out on the streets? Are you hurt by each child abuse death you see on television? Are you outraged by all the violence in the world?

Clearly, not a day goes by where someone is not affected by the violent actions of another person. Road rage, domestic violence, child abuse and murder are all part of the same problem - violent feelings resulting in violent actions.

Did you know that violence is bad for us in ways that we can't even see? The latest research shows that every violent act affects the brain. Violence changes the brain in ways that leave it different from normal. In children, the effects seem to be worse.

Violence, neglect and pain do not support a healthy brain, emotions or full intelligence. Who in their right mind would pick that for any child?

But violence is something that IS under our control. And we CAN do something about it.

By choosing NOT to pick violence, we can break the chains of violence that have been with us throughout history.

You can do it. But don't feel like you have to do it alone. If you can't, get help. It can be done even if change is not easy. There is power in change - the power to choose non-violence. That power is in you. And, that power is you!

HERE ARE 20 THINGS YOU CAN DO TO CHANGE THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

- 1) Choose words, not violent actions, to express yourself when you are angry.
- 2) Learn ways to relax when you are under stress so that you don't explode. People who explode always have regrets. If something is stirring up feelings of violence, walk away.
- 3) Use positive discipline with children. Never use violence, such as hitting, belting, whooping, strapping, slapping or any other way to try to cause pain to a child. Never shake a baby as this action can cause death. Never hit a baby. Never hit a child. Never hit anyone.
- 4) If you don't know what positive discipline is, learn about it. Spend time with your kids. Play with them. Supervise what they are doing. Build trust through caring, listening and non-violence, so that they will talk to you. Guide them with words and your example.
- 5) Support children, even when they make mistakes. Mistakes can help us grow.
- 6) Learn to apologize and apologize when you've made a mistake. We are all human, and taking responsibility for what we have done means there will be times when we need to apologize. Teach your children to apologize, too. Learn to accept an apology and forgive or get over it.
- 7) Be aware of when you are feeling angry, so that you can try to deal with it in a positive way. Take a time out for yourself. Exercise helps a lot with stress and gives you energy to cope, too. And, don't forget to stretch each day!
- 8) Call for a back up. Ask for support or someone to take over for you so that you can take some deep breaths. Call for help.
- 9) Do not ignore violence if you see it or if you are a victim. Tell someone. Call the police.
- 10) Listen to one another. Work to peacefully resolve disagreements. Agree to disagree.

11) Get help to heal from your past pain so that you don't pass it on to others or take it out on others. If you are cranky, nasty, negative or violent, you can be sure there's a reason for it. Once you figure out why you are the person you are, you can CHOOSE to be different.

12) Get in touch with any violence in your past, including being hit as a child and make a pledge not to do that in your life or to those you LOVE. Violence is NOT love.

13) Practice patience everyday and all through your life. So many things that we may be mad about will not even matter a few days from now, much less in a few years.

14) Realize that every act of violence keeps the cycle of violence going. Violence has never been shown to make things better. Violence hurts the victim and the perpetrator. Violence hurts everyone in the long run.

15) Don't do drugs or get drunk. Drugs and alcohol burn you out and make you crankier than normal. Drugs and alcohol do not help your brain deal with stress or anger. Keep drugs, alcohol and guns away from children.

16) Speak with others about violence. Find people for support who also do not want to choose violence.

17) If you've used violence against anyone, take responsibility for the pain you've caused and apologize. Decide that you will not use violence against anyone again.

18) Don't blame the movies, video games, The Bible, God, your country, your parents or anything else for your violent actions.

19) Make your home a violence-free safe zone. That means no violence between anyone, including parents, brothers and sisters and visitors. Relationships with love and safety are not built upon violence.

20) Put it in writing. Have family members sign an anti-violence contract.

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For support, free posters, relaxation tapes and booklets about non-violence and positive discipline, please call 1-800-753-5456 or visit PsychHealth, Ltd. online at www.psychhealthltd.com.

To request free copies of this leaflet in English or Spanish, write PTAVE, P.O. Box 1033, Alamo, CA 94507, call 925-831-1661 or e-mail riak@nospank.net. It can also be printed from the Web at the following URLs: (English) - www.nospank.net/gomez3.pdf (Spanish) - www.nospank.net/gomez4.pdf

Visit www.nospank.net to learn more about violence-free parenting.

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Changing Violence and Child Abuse: What Can You Do?

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