

Teaching Tolerance

November 2009

Parenting *Rules!*

Why is Teaching Children Tolerance Important?



As our communities become more diverse, it is even more important to teach our children about tolerance. Children need to learn to accept differences in others because we live in a world with a wide range of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds.

Tolerance, kindness and empathy (being understanding of others) are qualities a child learns by observing the adults in his/her life and by being encouraged to practice those skills.

Parents, caregivers and teachers can help children learn and improve these skills in the following ways:

- Role model by example. Adults should be very careful to model kindness, respect and compassion in front of children. This means not speaking badly about people based on things like their ethnic background, religion or physical appearance.
- Have an on-going conversation with your children about respecting the differences of others and celebrating the diversity of the world around them.
- Children are naturally curious about people's differences. Do not ignore or punish them for questions about those differences. Try your best to answer those questions with respect and honesty.
- Expose children to diversity by learning about the cultural traditions of their friends and neighbors.

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Raising Compassionate Kids

According to The National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center, almost 30% of children in the United States are involved in bullying as either a bully, a target of bullying, or both. They report that children who bully are physically aggressive, have pro-violence attitudes and lack empathy for others. Children today have become more aggressive and violent mostly due to the influences of highly competitive sports, violent video games and media exposure.



If we, as a society, are going to turn the tide of violent behaviors toward peace, we need to start with our youth.

Here are some ways parents can raise kids who understand and practice compassion (awareness of the suffering of others):

- ✓ Demonstrate gentleness and kindness to your kids through your actions, everyday.
- ✓ Teach your children to say please and thank you.
- ✓ Praise and recognize when your child is practicing kindness, respect and compassion.
- ✓ Encourage cooperation over competition. Teach your children to view sports as a time to practice "team work", not as a way to win or be better than others.
- ✓ Establish rules in your family that rudeness, name calling and aggressive behavior are unacceptable.
- ✓ Encourage your children to be helpful at home and in your community.

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Creating Violence-free Environments



The Department of Health and Human Services recently reported the results of a survey that revealed that 60% of children in the US have been exposed to violence in the past year. Of those children more than half had personally experienced violence while the rest reported being a witness of violence. These are staggering statistics.

We need to make a
change towards peace!

The following are ways parents and caregivers can create and promote safe, violence-free environments for children:

- Establish an environment at home and school that encourages respect, support and compassion and does not tolerate bullying or violent behaviors.
- Learn peaceful conflict resolution and negotiation skills that you can teach your children.
- Choose non-violent toys and entertainment for your family.
- Build positive connections in your neighborhood and community.
- Teach your children to value sportsmanship, respect for others, community service and compassion.

For more information on the effects of violent media on children go to: www.psychologymatters.org/mediaviolence.html

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Resources for Parents, Caregivers and Teachers

The National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

1600 Clifton Rd. Atlanta, GA 30333

800-CDC-INFO www.safeyouth.org/scripts/parents/index.asp

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

810 Seventh Street NW. Washington, DC 20531

202-307-5911 <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/>

Safe Rhode Island: Violence and Injury Prevention Program

Rhode Island Department of Health

3 Capitol Hill Providence RI 02908

1-800-942-7434 www.health.ri.gov/disease/saferi/planning_violence.php

Institute for the Study and Practice Of Nonviolence

9 Central Street Providence, RI 02907

www.nonviolenceinstitute.org

Kids Health

kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/feelings/tolerance.html

Whole Family

www.wholefamily.com/aboutyourkids/children/prejudice.html

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Prevent Child Abuse
Rhode Island



Rhode Island
Family & Children's Trust Fund

Parenting Rules! e-news is produced by Prevent Child Abuse Rhode Island and is partially supported by an annual grant from the Rhode Island Family & Children's Trust Fund

Administered by the RI Department of Children, Youth & Families

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Please share this information with the families in your programs. Thank you!