

# Parenting Matters

**PARTNERS IN PARENTING**

Quarterly Newsletter

July 1999

For Colorado Parents

Colorado State University

## Violence and Grief

### Confronting the issues that hurt

#### Violence

There is no single cause of violence and there is no simple solution. People often commit violence because of one or more of the following:

- Expression – to release feelings of anger or frustration. They feel there is no other way to express their emotions.
- Manipulation – to control others or get something they want.
- Retaliation – to retaliate against those who have hurt them or someone they care about.

#### Warning Signs

Violence is a learned behavior. Like all learned behaviors, it can be changed. Recognizing the warning signs of violence is how to begin to solve the problem:

- loss of temper on a daily basis
- frequent physical fighting
- significant vandalism
- increase in use of drugs or alcohol
- increase in risk-taking behavior
- detailed plans to commit acts of violence
- announcing threats or plans to hurt others
- enjoying hurting animals
- carrying a weapon

Take action if someone shows warning signs of violence. Hoping someone else will deal with the situation is the easy way

out. Above all, take measures to be safe. Don't be alone with the person who shows signs of violence and try to remove the person from the situation that is setting him or her off.

#### A Call for Help

If youth recognize any of the warning signs of violent behavior in themselves, you can help when you:

- Acknowledge their concern about hurting others as the first step.
- Listen to the person.
- Assess the immediate danger.
- Talk about dealing with anger and way to control violent behavior.
- Put the youth at risk in touch with a

licensed health professional that can help.

#### Dealing with Anger

It is normal to feel anger and frustration at times, but those feelings don't justify violent actions. There are ways to deal with anger without resorting to violence:

- Learn to talk about your feelings
- Express yourself calmly – express criticism, disappointment, anger or

displeasure without losing your temper.

Ask yourself if your response is safe and reasonable.

- Listen carefully to others.
  - Respond without getting upset when someone gives you negative feedback.
- Ask if you can understand the other person's point of view.

• Negotiate – work out problems by looking at alternative solutions and compromises.

• Anger is part of life but you have to learn to be strong, be safe and be cool when faced with it.

Everyone feels anger in his or her own way. By recognizing how anger feels, it is easier to control violent behavior. You can reduce feelings of anger:

- Take slow, deep breaths and concentrate on your breathing
- Imagine yourself somewhere calming and relaxing
- Try other thoughts or actions that have helped you relax in the past.
- Stop and consider the consequences.

#### Grief

Regardless of the circumstances, grief for most is an overwhelming and long lasting reaction. It does not unfold over a series of defined stages; it builds and changes over time.


Grief is manifested in a variety of ways and does not proceed in a linear fashion. It involves a complicated multiplicity of thoughts, feelings, behaviors and physical reactions. People at different ages deal with grief in different ways. Many times, adolescents will try to mask their symptoms by turning to alcohol and other drugs and will need help to find more constructive ways to deal with their grief. They may become aggressive, unable to concentrate and even feel guilty. Young children may regress to behaviors more typical of an earlier developmental

#### Specific contributing factors to violent behavior include:

- peer pressure
- need for attention
- feelings of low self worth
- early childhood abuse or neglect
- violence at home, in the community or in the media
- easy access to weapons

# Helpful summer sun safety tips

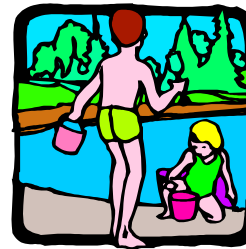
School is out, summer is here. After many cold days that restrict outdoor activities, children look forward to playing in the warm sun. The sun feels good but can be unhealthy if precautions are not taken.

 The sun can cause uncomfortable sunburns and is the main cause of skin cancer. Every year about 1 million Americans develop skin cancer due to damage caused by the sun. Children enjoy outdoor activities but parents and child care providers can take certain safety measures to assure a healthy and safe summer.

- outdoor activities should be planned before 10:00 a.m. and after 4:00 to avoid peak sun burning hours
- be careful even on cloudy days as clouds do not block all the sun's rays
- enjoy the shade of trees or buildings while playing outside
- dress children in loose clothing such as cotton tee shirts that cover shoulders, back and upper arms

- cool straw hats with wide brims can protect the face and neck from harmful sun rays
- babies should be kept out of direct sunlight—use an umbrella or baby stroller with canopy when outside in summer sun
- choose and use, as directed, a waterproof sunscreen made for children (caregivers should obtain parental permission to apply sunscreen)
- should a child become sunburned, give juice or water to replace lost fluids—cool water applied to the skin is soothing
- if children under the age of 1 become sunburned and if older children blister or experience pain, contact a physician
- encourage children to drink lots of water when playing outside to avoid dehydration

- be aware of what can happen and know what to do in case of accidents—keep a first aid kit nearby when supervising outdoor activities



Children enjoy playing in water. The Colorado Department of Human Services prohibits child care providers from using permanent wading pools. The use of portable wading pools with water temperature 60 degrees and above is encouraged. If used, these pools should be emptied and properly stored

after each use. Lawn sprinklers or garden hoses are safer and more sanitary for water play. Children should be carefully supervised during any and all water play activities.

Cool summer snacks such as a refreshing juice slush, pudding pops and ice cream can be made and enjoyed by all.

—by Pat Johnson, HDFS Specialist

# Health concerns of Colorado youth

There are three major causes of adolescent mortality in Colorado: unintentional injury, suicide and homicide.

Unintentional injury is the leading cause of adolescent death in Colorado. Young males are at a higher risk of death for all types of injury but the gender difference is narrowing. The majority of unintentional injuries are a result of motor vehicle crashes.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death for state's teens. Although suicide rates are declining in Colorado, they remain substantially higher than the national rates. Females are more

likely to report being sad and depressed but both males and females find it difficult to seek help for mental illness. Risk factors

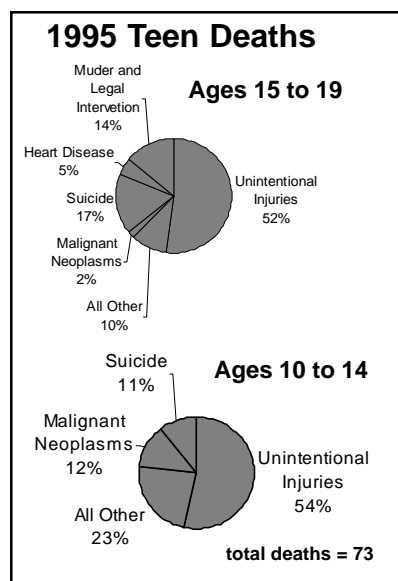
include: verbalizing thoughts of suicide; substance abuse; child and physical abuse; being exposed to other violence; personality traits including perfectionism and impulsivity; having concerns about sexual identity; and having problems with school, peers or family.

Teens experience the highest rates of violent crime than any other age group in the United States. This is due to the accessibility of firearms.

Although deaths caused by violent

violence is present are far more likely to become the next generation of victims and offenders. The largest predictor of violent crime is a lack of a sense of trust, common values and cohesion in neighborhoods and the resistance of people to intervene in the lives of children.

—Compiled from *Adolescent Health in Colorado, 1997*



crime have steadily decreased, firearm death has remained relatively constant. Children who grow up in homes where

**Parenting Matters**  
 Published quarterly by  
 Partners in Parenting,  
 Colorado State University  
 Cooperative Extension.  
 Program Coordinator: Chris Whaley  
 Editor:  
 Brooke Baldwin  
 Questions or comments?  
 Call us at (800) 457-2736



## Fast Facts for Families

### Talking with kids about drugs and alcohol

#### 1. Listen Carefully

Student survey's reveal that when parents listen attentively to their children's concerns and feelings, kids feel comfortable talking to them and are more likely to remain drug free.

#### 2. Let Kids Know it's Okay to Act Independently

This is particularly important since peer pressure is a reason kids try drugs.

#### 3. Role Play How to Say No

Role play ways in which your child can refuse to go along with his friends without being a social outcast.

#### 4. Encourage Choice

Allow your child plenty of opportunity to become a confident decision-maker. As children become skilled at making good choices, they will feel more secure in their ability to make the right decision concerning drugs if and when the time arrives.

#### 5. Give Appropriate Information

Make sure that the information you offer fits your child's age and cognitive level. Short, simple comments, initiated by you and repeated often enough will get the message across.

#### 6. Establish a Clear Family Position on Drugs

Establishing a family policy toward drugs won't do much good unless your children already know how to obey rules. Expect them to obey rules for everyday situations.

#### 8. Do the Right Thing

If your kids see you drinking to excess or taking drugs irresponsibly, it completely undercuts your well-intentioned discussions. Your behavior must reflect your belief that drugs and alcohol must be used both responsibly and sparingly.

#### 9. Discuss What Makes a Good Friend

Since peer pressure is so important when it comes to kids' involvement with drugs, it makes sense to talk to them about what

# Do you suspect your child is using drugs?

If you suspect your child is using drugs, the first thing to do is stay calm. Drug use is a preventable behavior and drug addiction is a treatable disease. The sooner it is detected and faced, the sooner the person addicted can be helped.

No one factor determines who will and will not use drugs, but here are some things to watch for:

- Low grades or poor school performance
- Aggressive, rebellious behavior
- Excessive influence by peers
- Lack of parental support and guidance
- Behavior problems at an early age

Being alert to the signs of drug use takes a keen eye and sometimes it is difficult to know the difference between normal teenage behavior and behavior cause by drugs. When trying to distinguish between the two, consider the following questions:

- Does your child seem withdrawn, depressed, tired and careless about

personal grooming?

- Has your child become hostile and uncooperative?
- Have your child's relationships with family members deteriorated?

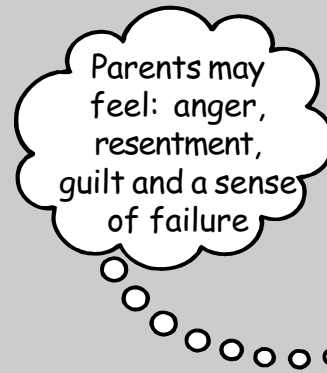
- Has your child dropped old friends and acquired new ones?
- Has your child lost interest in hobbies, sports and other favorite activities?
- Have your child's eating or sleeping habits changed?

Positive answers may indicate drug use but may also apply to a child

who is having difficulty in some other area of life. When in doubt, get help. Have your family doctor or local clinic examine your child to rule out illness or other physical problems.

Even when signs are obvious, parents are sometimes reluctant to admit that their child could have a problem. If your child is using drugs, it is important to face the problem promptly.

— Compiled from *Drug-Free Resource*



makes a good friend.

#### 10. Encourage Social Skills

Encouraging social skills like sharing and cooperation will help your children make and maintain good friendships.

#### 11. Build Self-Esteem

When kids feel good about themselves, they are much less likely to turn to illegal substances.

- Offer lots of praise.
- Criticize the action, not the person.
- Assign manageable chores.
- Spend one-on-one time with your child.
- Say, "I love you." Nothing will make your child feel better

#### 12. Be Media Literate

Movies, television and music barrage kids with distorted messages about drugs, making it seem that using drugs is cool. Fortunately, you can help counteract these

messages by helping children assess whatever they view.

#### 13. Encourage Healthful Activities

Children who are very involved in wholesome activities, like after school activities and sports, are more likely to make friends and develop interests that will keep them away from drugs.

#### 14. Repeat the Message

Information and lessons about drugs are important enough to bear frequent repeating.

#### 15. Seek Help

If your child becomes withdrawn, loses weight, starts doing poorly in school, turns extremely moody, has glassy eyes talk with them and reach out to them. You'll be helping your child to a happier, healthier future.

— Compiled from *Drug-Free Resource*

*grief continued from page 1*

stage. For example, a young child may wet the bed, suck a thumb or talk baby talk even though he or she hadn't done so in months.

The healing process is likely to be more difficult in certain types of situations. Factors that contribute to the way a person grieves are related to the person who died, the death event itself and to the person who is grieving. Traumatic grief occurs in conjunction with catastrophic events that effect many. It involves grief reactions and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Characteristics of PTSD include: hyper-vigilance, exaggerated startle reactions, intrusive thoughts, images and perceptions, "hallucinations," persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma.

At one point, researchers believed it was crucial to break the bond with the person who died. In recent years, it has become more evident that healthy resolution to one's grief may well include an ongoing attachment with the person who died as an individual who will always be important to the survivor.

— Adapted from Dr. Kevin Oltjenbruns, Ph.D.  
*Institute Briefs, April and May 1999*

**Common Grief Related Symptoms**

<b>Physical</b>	<b>Mental</b>	<b>Behavioral</b>
· fatigue	· shock	· crying
· disturbed sleep	· emotional numbness	· hostile
· loss of energy	· sadness	· loss of interest in daily activities
· change in appetite	· anger	· restlessness
· headaches	· fear	· withdrawl
· various health concerns	· guilt	· over-dependence on others
	· apathy	
	· disorientation	

**Suggestions for Providing Support**

- Give permission to grieve - understand grief is an extended process and will not be over in a few months.
- Encourage individual expressions of grief - help persons understand there is no "right way to grieve."
- Support acceptance of all aspects - loss is multifaceted; each component must be grieved.
- Listen to the bereaved - do not struggle for the right words to say.
- Share information about the grief process - information that grieving is normal can be reassuring to the person who is grieving.
- Assist in practical and concrete ways - suggest specific ideas of what may help or what you will do to help: "I will pick you up from school next week; I would like to bring a meal to your family on Tuesday."

Colorado State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Colorado counties cooperating. Cooperative Extension programs are available to all without discrimination.



This program fully funded by:

Colorado State University  
Cooperative Extension  
134 Aylesworth Hall NW  
Fort Collins, CO 80523  
(800) 457-2736



**Presorted Standard**  
**U.S. POSTAGE PAID**  
**FORT COLLINS, CO 80523**  
**PERMIT NO. 19**