

Parent Guide
to
Violence Prevention
and
Crisis Response

Longwood Central School District
Safety Committee

Longwood Central School District Parent Guide

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Rationale and Purpose of this Guide.....	1
Causes of School Violence	
Parenting Practices.....	2
Peer Pressure.....	2
Drugs & Alcohol.....	3
Bias.....	3
Violence Prevention	
How to Identify Early Warning Signs.....	4
Early Warning Signs.....	4
Identifying and Responding to Serious Warning Signs.....	7
What Parents Can Do.....	8
What Students Can Do.....	9
Bullying	
Definition of Bullying/Serious Nature of Bullying.....	10
6 Factors Which Separate Teasing & Bullying.....	11
Ways to Stay Bully Free.....	12
Bullying Behavior Chart.....	13
Types of Victims.....	14
Observers.....	15
Warning Signs of Bullying	
School and School Work.....	16
Social.....	16
Physical.....	17
Emotional/Behavioral.....	17
Behavior and Traits.....	18
Responding to a Crisis.....	20
Guidelines for Helping Bereaved Children.....	21
Behaviors/Reactions Parents Can Expect After a Crisis.....	23
Suggestions for Children and Parents.....	24
Developmental Guidelines for Assisting Your Teenager After a Crisis.....	25
Important Considerations for Parents.....	26
Developing Healthy Relationships.....	27
Most Frequently Asked Parent Questions.....	28
Evaluation.....	29

“A safe school is in place when students can learn and teachers can teach in a welcoming environment, free of intimidation and fear. It is a setting where the educational climate fosters a spirit of acceptance and care for every child; where behavior expectations are clearly communicated, consistently enforced and fairly applied.”

Ron Stephens
National School Safety Center

RATIONALE AND PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

The Longwood Central School District’s Board of Education recognizes the need to assist our students and their parents during and after a crisis. To that end, The Board of Education Safety Awareness Committee, in conjunction with our Mental Health professionals has designed the *Parent Guide to Violence Prevention and Crisis Response* for the Longwood School Community.

Many parents and families today live far from extended family members or trusted friends. Parents tell us that they do not always know where to turn for information on high quality resources when their child is having difficulty. To respond to the growing information needs of parents and families, this *Parent Guide to Violence Prevention and Crisis Response* offers easy and direct access to high quality information.

We often hear from parents that they are concerned about teasing, aggressive play, bullying, and other behaviors that might be a sign that a child or teenager is capable of violence. Parents, teachers, parenting educators and family support professionals are often unable to find high quality resources that provide a balanced view, in a parent-friendly format, on the difficult and complex issues surrounding the problem of violence in children.

Factors contributing to school violence are numerous, complex and community-related. America’s children are exposed to a steady diet of verbal and physical violence that begins early and continues throughout their lives. Numerous reports have cited the fact that children in the U.S. spend more time watching television and participating in computer related activities than attending school. Most of what children watch is unsupervised and much of it is filled with scene after scene of unadulterated sex and violence. This can lead to desensitization to violence. All too often children who behave violently are themselves victims of an overdose of violence.

In too many communities, children constantly send signals that they feel isolated from and maligned by society. These feelings know no geographic, social, or economic boundaries. Increasingly, many youth come from communities where the vast majority of the experiences to which they have been exposed have been hostile. They have had to fight simply to survive. These young people are filled with rage and a sense of rejection, and as a result they do not believe that they owe society anything.

At the same time, an increasing number of children who have not grown up in mean, hostile environments are involved in acts of violence. They often cite boredom or the excitement of control as reasons for their actions. It is difficult to understand their rebellion against society.

CAUSES OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE

PARENTING PRACTICES

Some children receive mixed messages from parents and other adults about what is right and what is wrong. The use of material goods to persuade children to behave in one way or to dissuade them from behaving in another is one example of sending a mixed message. In such situations, children are “BRIBED” by promise of expensive clothes or toys. Parents’ attitudes and actions convey strong messages about roles, responsibilities, and rights that must be learned in order to be good citizens in a democratic society. How children learn these lessons is as important as what they learn.

In addition, with more and more parents working outside of the home, students are very aware that it is sometimes difficult for school officials to contact their parents. Some parents may even refuse to come to school when asked, particularly if their child has been in trouble repeatedly. Parents may be so overwhelmed that they feel powerless to control their child or may blame the school for their child’s problems. Sometimes parents do not respond because of their own negative school experiences. They view school as a hostile environment. Likewise, a parent who does come to school may support the child’s disruptive/violent behavior as another form of ‘BRIBERY’ to gain the child’s affection, particularly when the relationship between the two is strained. Further, educators have reported that there are even very young children who state that their parents have told them (the children) that they do not have to do what the teacher says or that if anyone tries to take something away from them, or insults or hits them, they should fight back. Unfortunately, some parents admit that they have so instructed their child.

These types of parenting practices are evident across the socioeconomic spectrum. Parenting that indulges, neglects, abuses or ignores children, and that fails to provide strong, positive guidance, discipline and nurturance, contributes to the spread of violence in schools.

PEER PRESSURE

Children who have demonstrated violent behavior recognize that a lack of parental supervision at home is the major factor contributing to violence in schools. However, an equal number of children cite as a second major factor the presence of gang or group membership or peer group pressure as perhaps the fastest growing and most disturbing cause of acts of violence among youth, in or out of school. (The American Teacher, 1993; Toby, 1994; U.S. Department of Justice, 1991)

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

Children cite involvement with drugs and alcohol as the third major factor contributing to school violence. Those who reported the availability of drugs in school did not vary significantly by ethnicity, level of family income, or geographic location (U.S. Department of Justice, 1991). Although reports indicate that the use of drugs such as heroin, cocaine, marijuana, and crack is down among students in grades 6 - 12, the consumption of alcohol is not. Alcohol is the number one drug used by teenagers and young adults.

BIAS

Another emerging trend is the number of acts of violence related to race or religion. The 1993 *Lou Harris Study on Racism and Violence in American High School: Project Teamwork Responds* reported that racism and violence are rising significantly in America's high schools. Seventy-five percent of children surveyed reported seeing or hearing about racially or religiously motivated confrontations on a regular basis; up from 57 percent in an earlier survey (cited in National Consortium for Academics and Sports, 1993). This trend is particularly disturbing in light of the fact that diversity in American is rapidly increasing. *(Reprinted from the Center for the Prevention of School Violence-North Carolina State University)*

VIOLENCE PREVENTION

In response to the rise of violence in schools, the Department of Education launched research on the early and serious warning signs of violence. The major aim of this research was to provide schools with information so that they could be proactive in identifying children who are displaying violent warning signs. The following guide is designed for parents. It will include violence prevention as well as crisis response information.

HOW TO IDENTIFY EARLY WARNINGS SIGNS OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE

Parents can increase their ability to recognize early warning signs by establishing close, caring and supportive relationships with their children. A close relationship will enable a parent to be aware of their needs, attitudes, feeling, and behaviors, and in turn notice any significant changes in any of these areas.

EARLY WARNING SIGNS

In a majority of cases involving violence to self or others, there are several early warning signs. Manifestations of certain behavioral and emotional signs, when viewed in context, can indicate a child who may need help. Such signs do not always mean that a child is prone to violence, but they can provide us with the initiative to address the child's concerns and needs. The realization of early warning signs can enable parents to be proactive and help their child before any problems escalate. Parents are on the front line when it comes to observing any troublesome behaviors or dramatic changes in their child's demeanor. By sharing this information, a school community can provide timely and effective responses.

Of course, it is not always possible to predict when a child will become violent; however, being able to recognize certain warning signs can help parents get the necessary help for their child. Obviously, all children are different and the combination of warning signs present for one child will differ from another. Remember that if you begin to see a combination of warning signs present with your child, it is important to determine an appropriate intervention.

Research indicates that a majority of children who become violent towards themselves or others feel victimized and rejected. Many have displayed violent tendencies through their developmental progression. In addition, they indicate that they did not feel that they had a close relationship with an adult whom they could go to for support. It is difficult enough for children to negotiate adolescence, but add in victimization, and it only becomes more difficult. It is imperative that your child feels comfortable in coming to you with any concerns or problems so that any negative feelings do not escalate into self-injurious behavior or violence toward others.

The following are some important signs that may indicate that a child is attempting to negotiate a difficult time in life. Of course, none of these signs alone can predict violence or aggression towards self or others, but these early warning signs can aid you in identifying and referring children who are in need of professional help. The warning signs listed are not equally significant and they are not presented in order of seriousness. The early warning signs include:

Social withdrawal - gradual and complete withdrawal from social contacts can be an important indicator of a troubled child. This withdrawal can stem from feelings of depression lack of confidence, unworthiness, rejection and/or persecution.

Being a victim of violence - Children who are victims of violence, including physical or sexual abuse, in the community, at school, or at home are at risk for becoming violent towards themselves or others.

Feelings of being picked on or bullied - A child who is constantly picked on and humiliated at home or in school may initially withdraw socially. If not provided with support and help, this child is at risk for venting his feelings through violence.

Feelings of isolation, rejection and being alone - Children who are feeling isolated or rejected need support from adults or they too are at risk for violent lashing out behavior.

Declining school interest and poor academic performance - A drastic change in school related behaviors should be explored in terms of emotional and cognitive factors to determine the causes of the extreme change in behavior.

Expression of violence in writings and drawings - Children often express their feelings, thoughts, desires, and intentions through their poetry, artwork, or stories. An over representation of violent themes, directed at specific individuals (family members, peers, other adults) could indicate emotional problems that must be addressed.

Uncontrolled anger - Anger is a natural emotion; however frequently expressed anger due to minor irritants may be a sign of potential violent behavior.

Impulsive and chronic hitting, intimidation and bullying behaviors - Patterns of even mildly aggressive behaviors may, if left unchecked, escalate into increasingly serious violent behaviors.

History of discipline problems - Chronic difficulties at home and at school can suggest emotional concerns that need to be addressed by a qualified professional. If left alone, these behaviors may set the stage for increased violation of norms, defiance of authority, disengagement from school and violence towards others.

History of violence and aggression - Children who have shown a history of anti-social behaviors (cruelty to animals, fire setting, violence towards others or self) are at risk for escalating their violent behaviors. Similarly, children who engage in overt behaviors such as bullying, generalized aggression and defiance, and covert behaviors such as lying, cheating, and fire setting are at great risk for more serious aggressive behavior. It is imperative that a child's history be reviewed with behavioral experts to design an intervention.

Intolerance for difference and prejudicial attitudes - Intense prejudice based on racial, religious, sexual orientation, or physical appearance may lead to aggressive behaviors against those who are different. Education and appreciation for diversity must be stressed.

Alcohol and drug abuse - Alcohol and drug use and abuse leads to reduced self-control and can lead to increased violence.

Gang affiliation - Gangs with anti-social values and aggressive behaviors as the norm are a leading cause of injury and death among youth.

Inappropriate access to, possession of and use of firearms - Families can reduce inappropriate access to firearms by monitoring and supervising their child's access to weapons. Children with a history of aggressive tendencies, impulsivity, or emotional problems should not have access to any weapons.

A serious threat of violence - One of the most reliable indicators of violence towards self or others is a detailed and specific threat of the impending violent act. Research shows that a majority of children who hurt themselves or others talk about it before they commit the act. All threats must be taken seriously, and the child must be given the proper support and help from a professional in such cases (Dwyer, Osher & Warger, 2001, Early Warning Signs: A Guide to Safe Schools).

IDENTIFYING AND RESPONDING TO SERIOUS WARNING SIGNS

Serious warning signs strongly suggest that the child is potentially dangerous to self and/or others. An immediate response is required in the face of serious warning signs. These signs are often manifested as hostile overt, and serious behaviors directed at others. More often than not, the child's family and staff members have noticed these serious warning signs. It is critical that you do not look the other way in the face of these serious warning signs.

Serious warning signs can include:

- ✓ Detailed threats of lethal violence.
- ✓ Severe destruction of property.
- ✓ Severe rage for seemingly minor reasons.
- ✓ Serious physical fighting with peers or family members.
- ✓ Possession and/or use of firearms or weapons.
- ✓ Self-injurious behaviors or threats of suicide.

Safety must always be the Number One concern! Manifestation of any of these serious warning signs must not be taken lightly. Action must be taken immediately! Immediate intervention is necessary when a child:

- ✓ Is carrying a weapon, particularly a firearm, and has threatened to use it.
- ✓ Has presented a detailed plan (time, place, method) to harm themselves or harm others, particularly if the student has a history of aggression or has attempted to carry out threats in the past.

(Dwyer, et al., 2001)

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

*“Adolescents do **not** want to be left to their own devices. In national surveys and focus groups, America’s youth have given voice to serious longing. They want more regular contact with adults who care about and respect them.”*

-The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development

❖ **Parents can help tremendously in creating a safe school. Here are some ideas that parents in other communities have tried.**

- Discuss the school’s discipline policy with your child. Show your support for the rules and help your child understand the reasons for the rules.
- Involve your child in setting rules for appropriate behavior at home and be consistent in handing down consequences.
- Teach your child how to solve problems. Praise your child when he or she follows through to solve a problem without aggression or violence.
- Help your child understand the value of accepting individual differences.
- Keep lines of communication open with your child, even when it is tough. Encourage your child always to let you know where and with whom he or she will be. Get to know your child’s friends.
- Listen to your child if he or she shares concerns about friends who may be exhibiting troubling behaviors. Share this information with a trusted professional, such as the school psychologist, principal, or teacher.
- Help your child to find ways to show anger that do not involve verbally or physically hurting others. When you get angry, use it as an opportunity to model these appropriate responses for your child and talk about it.
- Talk with your child about the violence he or she sees, on television, in video games, and possibly in the neighborhood. Help your child understand the consequences of violence.
- Note any disturbing behaviors in your child. For example, frequent angry outbursts, excessive fighting and bullying of other children, cruelty to animals, fire setting, frequent behavior problems at school and in the neighborhood, lack of friends, and alcohol or drug use can be signs of serious problems. Get help for your child. Talk with a trusted professional in your child’s school or in the community.
- Model non-violent behaviors for your child.
- **Give your child consistent love, support and attention.**

WHAT STUDENTS CAN DO

- ❖ There is a great deal students can do to help create and maintain safe schools. Here are some things students in other schools have tried:
 - Listen to your friend if they share troubling feelings or thoughts. Encourage them to get help from a trusted adult, such as a school psychologist, counselor, social worker, leader from the faith community, or other professional. If you are very concerned, please seek help for them. Share your concerns with your parents!
 - Join and support student organizations that combat violence, such as “Students Against Destructive Decisions”.
 - Participate in violence prevention programs such as peer mediation and conflict resolution. Work with teachers and administrators to report threats, intimidation, weapon possession, drug selling, graffiti and vandalism.
 - Help to develop and participate in activities that encourage the understanding of individual differences and that respect the rights of all people.
 - Volunteer to be peer mentor or tutor for younger students. Model responsible behavior. Refrain from teasing, bullying, and intimidating behaviors.
 - Be a role model! Take personal responsibility by reacting to anger without physically or verbally harming others.
 - Seek help from your parents or a trusted friend, such as a school psychologist, social worker, counselor, teacher, if you are experiencing intense feelings of anger, fear, anxiety or depression.

BULLYING

THE DEFINITION OF BULLYING

- ◆ Targeting a child for repetitive negative actions.
- ◆ Imbalance of power so victim can't defend himself/herself.
- ◆ Unequal level of affect.

THE SERIOUS NATURE OF BULLYING

- ◆ Children being bullied **need and deserve adult intervention** and help.
- ◆ The problem is too serious for them to solve alone.
- ◆ Without intervention, **the problem will not go away**.
- ◆ Bullies will keep bullying unless adults do something about it.

Bullying is a form of terrorism that encompasses a group of antisocial behaviors including assault, intimidation, extortion, some forms of vandalism, cruel teasing and unwanted contact of a physical or sexual nature.

6 FACTORS WHICH SEPARATE TEASING AND BULLYING

1. Intent to harm.
2. Intensity and duration.
3. Power of abuser.
4. Vulnerability of victim.
5. Lack of support.
6. Consequences on victim.



WAYS TO STAY BULLY FREE

Avoid bullies

Act confident

Look confident

Be observant

Tell a friend

Tell an adult

Be assertive

Stay calm

Keep a safe distance

Walk away

Say "Stop it!"

Say "Leave me alone!"

Say "Whatever!"

Use humor

Use "I messages"

Travel in a group

Join a group

If you're in danger, RUN

BULLYING BEHAVIORS CHART			
MILD	MODERATE		SEVERE
PHYSICAL AGGRESSION			
Pushing Shoving Spitting	Kicking Hitting	Defacing property Stealing	Physical acts that are demeaning humiliating, but not bodily harmful (e.g. de-panting) Locking in a closed or confined space
			Physical violence against or friends
			Threatening with a weapon Inflicting bodily harm
SOCIAL ALIENATION			
Gossiping Embarrassing	Setting up to look foolish Spreading rumors about	Ethnic slurs Setting up to take the blame	Publicly humiliating (e.g. revealing personal information) Excluding from group Social rejection
			Maliciously excluding Manipulating social order achieve rejection Malicious rumor mongering
			Threatening with total isolation by peer group
VERBAL AGGRESSION			
Mocking Name Calling Dirty looks Taunting	Teasing about clothing or possessions	Teasing about appearance	Intimidating telephone calls
			Verbal threats of aggression against property or possessions
			Verbal threats of violence inflicting bodily harm
INTIMIDATION			
Threatening to reveal personal information Graffiti Publicly challenging to do something	Defacing property or clothing Playing a dirty trick	Taking possessions (e.g. lunch clothing, toys)	Extortion
			Threats of using coercion family or friends
			Coercion Threatening with a weapon

Adapted with permission of authors. Copyright © 1992 by Garrity & Baris

THE TWO TYPES OF VICTIMS

PASSIVE VICTIMS

The most common type of victim; easy to identify.

- ◆ Lack social skills.
- ◆ Cry easily.
- ◆ Lack the ability to use humor to defuse conflict.
- ◆ May be lonely and depressed.
- ◆ Yield easily to bullying.
- ◆ Likely to be anxious and insecure.
- ◆ Unable to defend themselves.

PROVOCATIVE VICTIMS

- ◆ A much smaller group; are often difficult to recognize as victims.
- ◆ Restless children who irritate and tease others and don't know when to stop.
- ◆ Fight back in bullying situations but end up losing (ineffectual aggressors).
- ◆ Easily emotionally aroused.
- ◆ Tend to maintain the conflict and lose with frustration and distress.
- ◆ May be diagnosed with ADHD.
- ◆ Tend to make you feel like they deserve it.

OBSERVERS

80% of students are not the bully or the victim

- ◆ DO NOT participate.
- ◆ DO NOT talk about the event afterwards.
- ◆ DO support the victim in private.
- ◆ DO alert an adult.
- ◆ DO appeal to the bully to stop...Appeal to his/her better nature.
- ◆ DO offer to help the victim in front of the bully.
- ◆ DO confront the bully during the attack.
- ◆ DO join forces against bully.
- ◆ DO bring the issue to a peer mediation group.

KEY: Kids know there is a zero tolerance policy and that good conduct is rewarded.

WARNING SIGNS OF BULLYING

The following behaviors may indicate that a child is being bullied or is at risk of being bullied.

When any of these behaviors are evident and persistent over time, you should definitely investigate. There's no magic number of warning signs that indicate a student is definitely being victimized, but it's better to be wrong than to allow a child to suffer.

Some of these characteristics are obviously more serious than others. A child who talks about suicide or carries a weapon to school, for example, needs immediate help. Don't wait for the child to come to you (this may never happen). Following the guidelines established by your school, contact a professional who is specially trained in dealing with high-risk behaviors.

SCHOOL AND SCHOOL WORK

1. Sudden change in school attendance/academic performance.
2. Erratic attendance.
3. Loss of interest in school work/academic performance/homework.
4. Decline in quality of school work/academic performance*.
5. Academic success; appears to be the teacher's pet*.
6. Difficulty concentrating in class, easily distracted.
7. Goes to recess late and comes back early.
8. Has a learning disability or difference.
9. Lack of interest in school sponsored activities/events.
10. Drops out of school sponsored activities he or she enjoys.

* True, #4 and #5 are opposites. They are also extremes. Watch for any extremes or sudden changes. These can be signs that something stressful is happening in a student's life.

SOCIAL

1. Lonely, withdrawn, isolated.
2. Poor or no social/interpersonal skills.
3. No friends or fewer friends than other students, unpopular, often/always picked last for groups or teams.
4. Lacks a sense of humor, uses inappropriate humor.
5. Often made fun of, laughed at, picked on, teased, put down, and/or called names by other students, doesn't stand up for himself or herself.
6. Often pushed around, kicked and/or hit by other students, doesn't defend himself or herself.
7. Uses "victim" body language—hunches shoulders, hangs head won't look people in the eye, backs off from others.

WARNING SIGNS OF BULLYING (continued)

8. Has a noticeable difference that sets him or her apart from peers.
9. Comes from a racial, cultural, ethnic, and/or religious background that puts him or her in the minority.
10. Prefers the company of adults during lunch and other free times.
11. Teases, pesters, and irritates others, eggs them on, doesn't know when to stop.
12. Suddenly starts bullying other students.

PHYSICAL

1. Frequent illness*.
2. Frequent complaints of headache, stomach ache, pains, etc.*
3. Scratches, bruises, damage to clothes or belongings, etc., that don't have obvious explanations.
4. Sudden stammer or stutter.
5. Has a physical disability.
6. Has a physical difference that sets him/her apart from peers—wears glasses, is overweight/underweight, taller/shorter than peers, “talks funny,” “looks funny”, “walks funny”, etc.
7. Change in eating patterns, sudden loss of appetite.
8. Clumsy, uncoordinated, poor at sports.
9. Smaller than peers.
10. Physically weaker than peers.

*A school nurse can determine if these symptoms might have other causes. A nurse can also gently question a child to learn if he/she is being bullied.

EMOTIONAL/BEHAVIORAL

1. Sudden change in mood or behavior.
2. Passive, timid, quiet, shy, sullen, withdrawn.
3. Low or no self confidence/self esteem.
4. Low or no assertiveness skills.
5. Overly sensitive, cautious, clingy.
6. Nervous, anxious worried, fearful, insecure.
7. Cries easily and/or often, becomes emotionally distraught, has extreme mood swings.
8. Irritable, disruptive, aggressive, quick tempered, fights back (but always loses).
9. Blames himself or herself for problems/difficulties.
10. Overly concerned about personal safety, spends a lot of time and effort thinking/worrying about getting safely to and from lunch, the bathroom, lockers, through recess, etc., avoids certain places at school.
11. Talks about running away.
12. Talks about suicide.

WARNING SIGNS OF BULLYING (continued)

BEHAVIORS AND TRAITS

The following behaviors and traits may indicate that a student is bullying.

1. Enjoys feeling powerful and in control.
2. Seeks to dominate and/or manipulate peers.
3. May be popular with other students who envy his or her power.
4. Is physically larger and stronger than his or her peers.
5. Is impulsive.
6. Loves to win at everything; hates to lose at anything. Is both a poor winner (boastful, arrogant) and a poor loser.
7. Seems to derive satisfaction or pleasure from others' fear, discomfort or pain.
8. Seems overly concerned with others "disrespecting" him or her; equates "respect" with fear.
9. Seems to have little or no empathy for others.
10. Seems to have little or no compassion for others.
11. Seems unable or unwilling to see thing from another person's perspective or "walk in someone else's shoes".
12. Seems willing to use and abuse other people to get what he or she wants.
13. Defends his or her negative actions by insisting that others "deserved it", "asked for it", or "provoked" him or her. A conflict is always someone else's fault.
14. Is good at hiding negative behaviors or doing them where adults can't notice.
15. Gets excited when conflicts arise between others.
16. Stays cool during conflicts in which he or she is directly involved.
17. Exhibits little or no emotion (flat affect) when talking about his or her part in a conflict.
18. Blames other people for his or her problems
19. Refuses to accept responsibility for his or her negative behaviors.
20. Shows little or no remorse for his or her negative behaviors.
21. Lies in an attempt to stay out of trouble.
22. Expects to be "misunderstood", "disrespected", and picked on. Attacks before he or she can be attacked.
23. Interprets ambiguous or innocent acts as purposeful and hostile. Uses these as excuses to strike out at others verbally or physically.
24. "Tests" your authority by committing minor infractions, then waits to see what you'll do about it.
25. Disregards or breaks school and/or class rules.
26. Is generally defiant or oppositional toward adults.
27. Seeks/craves attention; seems just as satisfied with negative attention as positive attention.

WARNING SIGNS OF BULLYING (continued)

28. Attracts more than the usual amount of negative attention from others; is yelled at or disciplined more often than other students.
29. Is street smart.
30. Has a strong sense of self esteem. *(Tip: This is contrary to the prevailing myth that bullies have low self-esteem. In fact, there's little evidence to support the belief that bullies victimize others because they feel bad about themselves.)*
31. Seems mainly concerned with his or her own pleasure and well being.
32. Seems antisocial or lacks social skills.
33. Has difficulty fitting into groups.
34. Has a close network of a few friends (actually "henchmen" or "lieutenants").
35. May have problems at school or at home; lacks coping skills.

As parents, you can't be with your child every second to stave off bully attacks. But, you can teach your children how to effectively handle themselves and the situation if they become victims of bullying.

Encourage your children to use words instead of fists. We've all heard the cliché "Two wrongs don't make a right," but how many of us, when we find out our children are being harassed by bullies, immediately tell them to fight back next time, or even worse, ridicule them for NOT defending themselves. It is important for adults not to say, "You're a sissy, why don't you fight back?"

Fighting back is not appropriate because first, the child is already frightened, and second, the child doesn't get support from his/her peers because they are also intimidated by the bully and don't want to become victims.

Parents must teach children non-violent ways to defend themselves. For example, children can thwart a bully attack by simply saying in a calm, but strong voice—without crying or whining—that they aren't going to let anyone abuse or intimidate them. It also helps for children to tell bullies that while they don't want to fight, they will defend themselves. By verbally standing up to bullies, children send the message that they aren't afraid, allowing them to maintain their dignity without coming to blows.

Teach your children how to walk away. Even the most eloquent, strongly spoken words aren't always enough to prevent abuse at the hands of a bully. In those cases, children need to know that it is not cowardly to walk (or even run) away especially when it's a potentially dangerous situation.

RESPONDING TO A CRISIS

Violence can strike at any time, anywhere. A crisis can be violent in nature, a natural disaster, the death of a close friend or family member, a divorce, a suicide, a terminal illness, or a change in the environment. A crisis can have a debilitating effect on people, leaving them feeling helpless and vulnerable. Appropriate and successful interventions can restore a sense of security in a short period of time.

It is imperative that parents and schools be well prepared for any potential crisis or violent act. Appropriate crisis response is critical. For schools and parents, responding in the aftermath of a tragedy is critical.

The Crisis Response Guide for Parents is designed to:

- Promote education and issues of bereavement and grieving.
- Provide parents with typical behaviors and reactions they can expect from their children following a crisis.
- Provide developmental guidelines for students during and after a crisis.
- Provide suggestions for parents when your child faces a crisis.
- Suggest how to raise emotionally healthy and productive children through an open relationship.

GUIDELINES FOR HELPING BEREAVED CHILDREN

All children, regardless of age, experience loss and grief. When given a safe environment in which to express what they are experiencing, the child's grief can become a process of growth and healing. The following guidelines are meant to provide just such an environment:

1. DO NOT deny children their feelings. Give them permission to express what they are experiencing without shame.
2. DO NOT judge one child's reactions by another's.
3. Reassure them that anger, guilt, sadness, and tears are normal responses to loss.
4. Tell them you are sorry about their loss.
5. Encourage children to talk about their feelings, but respect their right not to talk if they choose not to. Suggest alternative means of expressing themselves, such as drawing their feelings, writing a short story or poem, sculpting clay, listening to music which seems to capture their feelings, choreographing a dance, etc.
6. Assist children in understanding that to heal they will need time for solitude, as well as time with their friends and family.
7. Let them know that a person can be very sad even though he or she may not be crying.
8. Help children to recognize their anger and to find non-harmful, constructive ways of venting it.
9. Encourage them to discuss their guilt feelings. Help them to determine if their guilt is justified or rational. Let them know they are only human and that we all continue to learn as we experience more of life.
10. Charitable and other altruistic acts, (e.g. raising money for charity to combat a disease that has taken the life of a classmate), provide socially constructive means of mourning and can help to mitigate feelings of guilt.
11. Be aware of children's intellectual and emotional limitations and understand their developmental stage.
12. Provide honest, clear, and direct answers to questions about death, the funeral, and other aspects of the loss.

13. Try to be a role model for appropriate grief. Do not be afraid to express your own sadness.
14. Expect that the grief process will vary from child to child. Explain to children that they will experience high and low feelings, that there is nothing wrong with them.
15. **DO NOT** make decisions for children or attempt to put a time frame on their grief process. Respect their individual and unique journey with grief.
16. Encourage children to take care of themselves and to understand that alcohol and other drugs only delay the grieving process. Grief, even though painful, must be worked through in order for healing to occur.
17. Suggest (do not mandate) various readings related to death, loss and grief.
18. **GIVE HOPE, ENCOURAGEMENT AND TENDER LOVING CARE.** If possible, provide things such as plants, music, and pets (e.g. goldfish in the classroom) that are symbolic of life (Evans, Patricia in Webb, N., 1999)

BEHAVIORS/REACTIONS PARENTS CAN EXPECT FROM THEIR CHILDREN AFTER A CRISIS

After experiencing a traumatic event, it is very common for the emotional reactions to interfere with the ability to function either at the scene or later. Even when the event is over, one may experience strong emotional or physical reactions. It is very common, **and in fact normal**, for children to experience emotional after shocks (stress reactions) after a traumatic event. These stress reactions do not imply bizarre behavior or weakness, but rather indicates that a child needs some help through a difficult time in their lives. The following are reactions to look for and interventions to implement.

Physical Reactions

Fatigue	Shock
Dizziness	Numbness
Headaches	Difficulty breathing
Nausea	Shock symptoms

Emotional Reactions

Increased anxiety	Increased fear
Depression	Irritability
Guilt and/or grief	Denial
Severe panic	Uncertainty

Cognitive Reactions

Blaming someone	Nightmares
Memory problems	Loss of orientation
Flashbacks	Raised or lowered attentiveness
Blaming self or others	Poor problem solving ability
Hyper-vigilance	Concentration problems
Poor decisions	Intrusive images

Behavioral Reactions

Withdrawal	Emotional outbursts
Acting out	Pacing
Startle reactions	Intense anger
Regression	Increased or decreased appetite
Decreased academic performance	Increased aggression
Alcohol consumption in older children	Antisocial acts

The following suggestions for **children** should be considered:

- Children will require quality time with parent/adult.
- Children need to be reassured.
- Be truthful with children (age appropriately).
- Keep a routine in place with flexibility.
- Talk and listen to children often.
- Validate all of a child's feelings and opinions.
- Play with children.
- REASSURE, REASSURE, REASSURE.

The following suggestions for **adults** should be considered:

- Alternate periods of exercise with periods of relaxation.
- Reassure yourself that you are normal and having normal reactions to a stressful situation. Do not label yourself "Crazy".
- Structure your time and keep busy.
- Reach out to others. People do care! Spend time with them.
- Try to maintain a normal schedule.
- Eat regular meals, even if you are not up to it.
- Permit yourself to feel "rotten" sometimes. It is definitely NORMAL.
- Keep a journal of your feelings.
- Talk with others; it can be a wonderfully healing experience.
- Get as much rest as you can.
- Flashbacks are normal..don't fight them. They will decrease in time and become less painful.

Parents usually experience similar reactions to their children, and are likely to be affected by the crisis situation either directly through exposure to the crisis or indirectly through the child's experience. It is imperative for parents to seek out and receive support and guidance. Without such interventions, it may be difficult to fully meet the needs of your child. Seeking professional support and talking to family and friends can be very helpful. (Brooks & Siegel, 1996)

DEVELOPMENTAL GUIDELINES FOR ASSISTING YOUR TEENAGER AFTER A CRISIS

Teenagers

Teenagers can be made aware of the finality of death. Their feelings and thoughts are quite close to those experienced by adults. Often teenagers will show more grief, anger and guilt than younger children.

Teens may be angry with the person who died for:

- Not taking care of himself or herself.
- Abandoning them.

Teens may be angry with themselves for:

- Not intervening earlier.
- Wishing the person would die.
- Not saying goodbye.

Teens may be angry with their parents for:

- Not telling them the person who died was so sick.
- Spending so much time with the sick person.

Teens may be angry with their siblings for:

- No apparent reason.
- Grieving differently.
- Not seeming to care.

Guilt is often a side effect of a teenager's anger. They may question their actions....

- "How can I be angry at the person who died?"
- "How can I be alive when he's dead?"
- "I should have visited him or her before they died."

Developmentally, teenagers are already on a roller coaster ride. A crisis may make them feel out of control. In addition, teenagers do not like to let others see them cry. Be sure to let your teenager know that crying is a perfectly acceptable way to express themselves.

(Prothrow, 2000)

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS FOR PARENTS TO REMEMBER WHEN YOUR CHILD FACES A CRISIS

Be sure to speak with your child about the crisis and provide them with accurate and honest information.

- Encourage your child to express his/her feelings.
- Be a great listener.
- Do not minimize or judge feelings.
- Constantly reassure your child that things will get better. However, only make this statement if it is true.
- A child may lash out in anger at people he or she feels safe with. Do not take it personally.
- Reassure your child that you are always there for them.
- Provide additional individual time and affection for your child.
- Remind your child that he/she is safe, loved and appreciated.
- Monitor symptoms of depression, such as a change in overall functioning such as eating and sleeping patterns.
- Monitor use of alcohol and drugs as a means of self-medication.
- Do not be afraid to seek outside counseling for your child if his or her overall functioning declines.

(Carroll, 1998)

What can I do to help my child through a crisis situation?

As parents, you are the most influential factor in the recovery of your child from the emotional consequences of a crisis. Since you are the most emotionally involved with your child, your support, encouragement, and reassurance is of the utmost importance in your child's recovery. The following is a list of interventions that you can provide to address the reactions of your child to a crisis situation:

- ✓ Speak to your child regarding the crisis and provide him/her with accurate information regarding the crisis in simple and concrete language.
- ✓ Listen carefully to your child and show him/her that you understand what she feels.
- ✓ Your child needs constant reassurance that things will get better and that in the long run things will improve. It is important not to make false statements regarding the future. This will only lead to false hopes and distrust in the future.
- ✓ **If at any time you feel worried or troubled about your child's behaviors, please do not hesitate to consult the professionals in or out of school!!!**

DEVELOPING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS **HOW TO RAISE OPEN MINDED EMPATHETIC CHILDREN**

Our goal as parents is to raise emotionally healthy and productive children, who possess a strong sense of self-worth. We are not only responsible for teaching our students to be good students, but also good individuals with strong positive values. Children with a positive self-concept are TOLERANT, CARING and COMPASSIONATE, and they can express their feelings in an appropriate manner. When we teach our children these skills, they learn to accept others as they are, and ultimately to accept themselves as they are.

TOLERANCE

Tolerance is taught by practicing tolerance. Intolerant behaviors include gossiping, name calling, violence and rejection.

- ❖ We must treat people the way we want to be treated.
- ❖ No one is perfect. All children, parents and teachers make mistakes.
- ❖ All people are valuable.
- ❖ All people deserve respect and compassion.

FEELINGS

Teach the appropriate expression of feelings.

- ❖ Feelings are not right or wrong. They are real and not to be judged.
- ❖ Argue fairly. An argument must not end in yelling, hitting or pouting.
- ❖ Help children identify their feelings and explain to them that it is good to share one's feelings with others, but we do not have the right to express them by hurting someone else.

EMPATHY

Teach sympathy and compassion.

- ❖ Observe, model, and talk about the acts of caring, sharing and respect that you see in others.
- ❖ Explain the values and feelings behind your own acts of compassion.
- ❖ Raise children's awareness of their own positive effect of other people. Have them look at what they do to make others feel good or bad, and help them identify the reasons behind their actions. (Prothrow, 2000)

MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED PARENT QUESTIONS

Why has this Violence Prevention and Crisis Response Guide for Parents been created?

In light of the events taking place around the country, we want to be prepared for any type of crisis situation that could potentially occur.

Why do we need an organized guide?

A pro-active approach to violence and a crisis is one that is organized and in place. This guide can help in reducing the short and long-term consequences of a crisis on our children.

What can we do as parents to ensure that our children are safe?

In nearly all cases of school violence, there are early warning signs, which can be both behavioral and emotional indicators that a child may need help.

What are some early warning signs?

Please refer to pages 4 through 6 of this guide.

What should I do if I notice any of these early warning signs?

If you have a suspicion and/or a concern about your child, you should report this information to the school psychologist, social worker, guidance counselor, teacher, and/or building administrator. You may also wish to consult your physician.

If a crisis situation does occur, what types of behaviors/reactions can I expect from my child?

A child's reactions can depend on a number of variables. These include personal history, personality variables, age of the student, severity and proximity of the event, level of social support, student's relationship to those involved in the crisis, and the type and quality of intervention. While no two people respond to situations, including crisis situations in exactly the same manner, the following are often seen as immediate reactions to a significant crisis:

- ✓ Shock and numbness.
- ✓ Denial or inability to acknowledge the situation has occurred.
- ✓ Dissociative behavior - appearing dazed, apathetic, and expressing feelings of unreality.
- ✓ Confusion.
- ✓ Disorganization.
- ✓ Difficulty making decisions.

VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND CRISIS RESPONSE GUIDE FOR PARENTS
EVALUATION

This evaluation will determine how helpful the guide was to you. Please answer each question to the best of your ability and forward to:

Mr. Kevin McCarthy
Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources
Longwood Central School District
35 Yaphank Middle Island Road
Middle Island, NY 11953
Email: Kevin.McCarthy@Longwoodcsd.org

1. Which section of the manual was the most helpful to you and why?

2. Which section of the manual was the least helpful to you and why?

3. Are there sections of the manual you believe could be improved? Please be specific.

4. Would you be willing to help revise the manual?

5. Were there sections of the manual that needed additional clarification?

6. What additions would you recommend to the manual?