



**CITIZENS
CRIME
COMMISSION**
OF NEW YORK CITY

BUILDING RESILIENCE

A Parent and Caregiver Guide to
Preventing School-Based Targeted
Violence Before It Starts



In an increasingly digital world, young people are exposed to a wide array of online content that can range from positive and educational to inappropriate and even harmful. This guide is designed to help parents and caregivers engage in meaningful conversations around these tough topics and build resilience in their children.

KNOW THE SIGNS

It's important to remember that most teens facing challenges are not going to become violent. Teens go through difficult moments and a big part of growing up is learning through mistakes and errors of judgment. However, sometimes angst can evolve into anger or deep-seated grievances, it can be a signal that they need support and intervention to get them back on a positive track.

- 1. FEELING RESENTMENT OR HAVING GRIEVANCES WITH ANOTHER PERSON OR GROUP OF PEOPLE**
- 2. UNUSUAL CHANGES IN MOOD**
- 3. SUDDEN CHANGES IN THE WAY THEY DRESS OR SPEAK**
- 4. SUDDENLY WITHDRAWING FROM FRIENDS & FAMILY**
- 5. FEELING BULLIED, ALIENATED, ISOLATED OR EXCLUDED BY PEERS**
- 6. BECOMING MORE SECRETIVE**
- 7. OBSESSION WITH VIOLENCE OR PAST ACTS OF VIOLENCE**
- 8. RESEARCHING OR PRAISING PAST ATTACKERS**
- 9. VIEWING GORE OR VIOLENT EXTREMIST CONTENT ONLINE**
- 10. ACCEPTING THAT VIOLENCE IS A WAY TO ACHIEVE GOALS OR MAKE THINGS BETTER**
- 11. POSING WITH WEAPONS OR DISPLAYING VIOLENT EXTREMIST SIGNS/SYMBOLS**
- 12. MAKING VAGUE THREATS OR USING "EDGY" HUMOR TO THREATEN OTHERS**
- 13. MAKING THREATS OF HARMING THEMSELVES OR OTHERS**

SET THE RIGHT TONE & TIMING

CREATE A SAFE SPACE

Before talking to your child, create a private and safe space where you can't be overheard or interrupted. Find a time when they feel more relaxed and comfortable. This can be on a car ride home, over the dinner table, or any other time and place that makes your child feel safe.

STAY OPEN & NON- JUDGEMENTAL

Try not to judge anything they may say or put them down for sharing thoughts that are scary or harmful. Many young people don't fully understand the gravity of their words. Try to give them space to express their thoughts without rushing to respond or offer solutions. It's important to show empathy and not react impulsively; This encourages your teen to be more open and willing to engage in future conversations.

HAVE PATIENCE

Remember, these conversations may take time, and showing patience demonstrates that you value your child's perspective and are there to support them, no matter what.

HAVE A CONVERSATION

SHOW INTEREST & CURIOSITY

Ask them about their interests, friendships, favorite shows, or even the latest trends they're following—small questions can spark big discussions. Let them share their world with you on their terms, without pressure or judgment. Being curious about their lives not only helps you understand what's important to them, but it also shows that you value their thoughts and experiences. This kind of interest encourages them to come to you with both the little things and the big things, knowing you care about their interests.

GET THEM THINKING

Teens are constantly exposed to vast amounts of information and content online, which can sometimes be harmful. Help them build the habit of questioning what they see by discussing what's going on in the world, from their social media feeds to current events. This can help them form a better idea of what content should be avoided, and what is safe to engage with.

SUPPORT & REASSURE

Reassure your child that it's normal to face difficulties and that they don't have to have all the answers. Remind them that you're a team and that you're there to support them through whatever comes their way. Just being present can be a powerful source of strength and confidence for your teen.

EDUCATE & ENCOURAGE

EXPLAIN INTERNET SAFETY

Start by having open conversations about some of the risks they might encounter online, like cyberbullying, exposure to bad actors, and harmful content. Most importantly, reassure them that if they ever feel uncomfortable or unsure about something they encounter online, they can always come to you for guidance.

TALK ABOUT BULLYING & GOOD DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

Explain the importance of using social media and digital platforms responsibly—what they say online can have a lasting impact, so it's important to think before posting or commenting.

EMPHASIZE EMPATHY

Encourage them to treat others with respect, both online and offline, and to stand up against bullying when they see it happening. Make sure they understand the significance of empathy and how words and memes can hurt just as much as actions. Reassure them that if they ever face bullying or witness a peer being bullied, you're there to support them and help find solutions.

BUILD CONNECTIONS

SUPPORT A STRONG SENSE OF SELF

Help your child build confidence by supporting their choices. Reinforce the idea that their worth isn't defined by societal expectations or what others think of them. Encourage them to reflect on what matters most to them—whether it's their beliefs, hobbies, or personal goals—and remind them that it's okay to be different. A strong sense of self empowers teens to make choices based on their own values, fostering resilience in the face of challenges.

ENCOURAGE IRL HOBBIES & ACTIVITIES

Support activities that will give your child a sense of belonging and meaning. Encourage them to play sports, take art classes, play in a band or any other activity that interests them. Try to encourage friendships and hobbies that are in-person, if possible. Staying connected to the community can help teens feel supported and grounded in a network of people who share common values and interests.

GET HELP IF YOU NEED IT

If you feel overwhelmed and confused on what to do next, don't hesitate to get support. There are many resources available to you. Mental health professionals can offer specialized care and coping strategies, while teachers and administrators can help with academic or social concerns. Seeking help early can make a big difference in your teen's well-being, and shows them that reaching out for support is a positive and proactive step.



ONLINE RESOURCES

1. Speak Safely NY

www.speaksafelyny.com

Speak Safely NY connects loved ones to trained specialists who can help guide them through conversations on hate and violence.

2. Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) – Hatewatch

www.splcenter.org/hatewatch

SPLC tracks hate groups and extremism in the U.S., offering reports and articles on emerging hate symbols and movements.

3. Common Sense Media

www.commonsensemedia.org

Common Sense Media offers a wide range of resources on media literacy, including reviews, guides, and activities that help parents teach kids about online content and positive digital habits.

4. MediaSmarts

<https://mediasmarts.ca>

MediaSmarts is a Canadian non-profit that provides media literacy resources and guides on topics like fake news, advertising, and digital citizenship.

5. Family Online Safety Institute (FOSI)

www.fosi.org

FOSI offers resources on digital citizenship, online safety, and creating positive digital environments for families.

6. Internet Awesome by Google

<https://beinternetawesome.withgoogle.com>

This interactive curriculum teaches younger tweens about digital citizenship and online safety. Parents can use it to understand the basics of internet safety and responsible online behavior.

7. Connect Safely

www.connectsafely.org

ConnectSafely offers guides on various topics, including hate symbols, media literacy, and digital citizenship.

8. Anti-Defamation League (ADL) Hate Symbols Database

www.adl.org/hate-symbols

This database provides images and explanations of hate symbols commonly used by extremist groups. It's a great tool for identifying symbols and understanding their meanings.

9. Call or Text 988

<https://988lifeline.org/>

988 is the National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. They are available 24/7 to offer support to anyone feeling overwhelmed or in crisis.

LET'S WORK
TOGETHER
TO PREVENT VIOLENCE
