

Pointers For Parents

Violent Content May Influence Youth Violence

(NAPSA)—The best way to prevent youth violence may be to ask those who are directly affected by it.

That's why the National Campaign to Stop Violence recently asked middle-school students to express their views on the key factors affecting youth violence.

The campaign analyzed the contents of 10,000 essays submitted by middle-school children as part of its Do the Write Thing initiative, which encourages young people to write about how violence affects their lives.

Analysis of the essays determined that 31 percent of the 6th, 7th and 8th graders who participated in the project believe that violent entertainment is a significant catalyst for violence among their age group. Gang violence, drugs and bullying followed at 27 percent, 24 percent and 21 percent, respectively.

Peter Jensen, M.D., chairman of the New York City Do the Write Thing program and Mayo Clinic co-chair of the Division of Child Psychiatry and Psychology, said, "The significance of this study is that it is the young people themselves who are speaking out about the negative impact the violent content has on them."

According to the National Institute on Media and the Family, social scientists identified four factors that link to violence in children:

- Children are more likely to imitate the actions of a character with whom they identify in programs and video games;
- Video games require action—the player must get involved;
- Video games have a great deal of repetition, normally used



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as a learning tool; hence, children are learning violence;

- Children learn through reward systems of the type employed by video games.

Violence and bullying on or near school grounds is increasingly stressful to young people. While the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that between 1991 and 2007 there was no significant change in the level of school violence, there was a large increase in the number of students who feel unsafe.

The CDC survey of young people between the ages of 10 and 14 shows that 33 percent of 6th graders, 37 percent of 7th graders and 40 percent of 8th graders had carried a weapon to school and nearly 60 percent of each age group had been involved in a physical fight over a 30-day period. For more information on programs to curb youth violence, visit www.dtw.org. The initiative can also be found on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube.