



## Understanding and Addressing Aggression in Children and Teens



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Aggressive behavior in children and teenagers can be challenging to address and affects a child or teen's well-being and relationships. This handout aims to provide information about potential causes of aggressive behavior and what this behavior looks like. It will also provide strategies to manage and reduce aggressive behavior.

Aggression refers to behavior intended to cause physical or emotional harm or pain to others. It can manifest in various forms, including verbal aggression (name-calling, yelling), physical aggression (hitting, pushing), or relational aggression (spreading rumors, social exclusion).

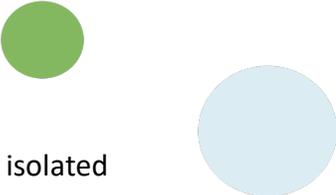
### **Causes of Aggression:**

Factors that contribute to aggressive behavior in kids and teens include:

- 1. Environmental Factors:** Exposure to violence, conflict at home or school, lack of positive role models, or inconsistent discipline can contribute to aggressive behavior.
- 2. Biological and Genetic Factors:** Some individuals might be predisposed to aggression due to differences in genetics, brain chemistry, or neurology.
- 3. Emotional and Psychological Factors:** Poor emotional regulation, low self-esteem, frustration, or unresolved conflicts may lead to aggressive responses.

### **Signs of Aggression:**

Recognizing the signs of aggression early can help individuals around a child or teen know when to intervene and provide appropriate support. These signs may include:

- Frequent arguments or conflicts with peers, siblings, or authority figures.
  - Physical confrontations or bullying behavior.
  - Angry outbursts disproportionate to the situation.
  - Destructive behavior towards objects or property.
  - Withdrawing from social interactions or becoming increasingly isolated
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## Strategies to Manage and Reduce Aggression:

- 1. Model Positive Behavior:** Encourage and demonstrate healthy ways of expressing emotions and resolving conflicts. Role-model being calm and communicating effectively with others
- 2. Provide a Supportive Environment:** Create a safe and nurturing environment at home and school, emphasizing respect, empathy, and understanding.
- 3. Teach Coping Skills:** Help children and teens learn strategies to manage anger and frustration, such as deep breathing, mindfulness, and/or taking a break from the situation that has triggered intense emotions.
- 4. Set Clear and Consistent Boundaries:** Establish clear rules and consequences for aggressive behavior. Consistency in enforcing these boundaries is crucial.
- 5. Encourage Communication:** Foster open communication to allow children and teens to express their feelings and concerns without judgment.
- 6. Seek Professional Help:** If aggression persists or significantly impacts daily life, consider seeking guidance from mental health professionals, therapists, or counselors.
- 7. Look for opportunities to praise good behavior:** Recognize when the child or teen is behaving in a positive way.
- 8. Find opportunities to laugh together as a family:** Connection with loving adults in a child or teens life is vital – laughter and positive conversations can help foster family relationships.
- 9. Take part in regular & frequent exercise:** Exercise can help children and teens struggling with aggression let off steam and has positive benefits for overall mental health.
- 10. Eat a healthy diet:** Nutritious food is important for mental and physical health.
- 11. Develop good sleep hygiene:** Getting adequate sleep is vital for teen or child's mental health and ability to manage emotions during the day.
- 12. Consider involvement in structured/organized activities (martial arts, swimming):** Structured activities can help teach a child or teen important lessons about cooperation and discipline.

Remember, each child is unique, and strategies may need to be tailored to their specific needs and circumstances. Patience, empathy, and consistent support are key to helping a child or navigate and overcome aggressive behavior.

**Useful Links:**

[How to talk with your teen | Caring for kids \(cps.ca\)](#)

[Parenting Tips, Advice, & Help | Empowering Parents](#)

[Use Positive Parenting | Proven strategies | Triple P in Canada | Triple P Positive Parenting Alberta \(triplep-parenting.ca\)](#)

[Parent Information Series - Choose It: Helping Your Teen Work Through Anger \(albertahealthservices.ca\)](#)

**Books:**

**“The Explosive Child”** by Ross Greene

**“Parenting a Teen Who has Intense Emotions: DBT Skills to Help Your Teen Navigate Emotional and Behavioral Challenges”** (there is a kid’s version too)

[Parenting a Teen Who Has Intense Emotions: DBT Skills to Help Your Teen Navigate Emotional and Behavioral Challenges: Harvey ACSW LCSW-C, Pat, Rathbone MSSW LCSW-C, Britt H.: 9781626251885: Books - Amazon.ca](#)

**American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry - aggression and oppositional behaviors called “A Guide for Families”** [odd\\_resource\\_center\\_odd\\_guide.pdf \(aacap.org\)](#)

**VIDEO:**

[\(213\) Rethinking Challenging Kids-Where There's a Skill There's a Way | J. Stuart Ablon | TEDxBeaconStreet - YouTube](#)