

http://www.kidshealth.org/teen/school_jobs/bullying/school_violence.html

Should You Worry About School Violence?

School violence is in the headlines again. After hearing news of school shootings or other violence, it's natural for students – no matter how old they are or where they go to school – to worry about whether this type of incident may someday happen to them.

It's rare that school violence takes place on the scale of what happened at Virginia Tech or Columbine High School. But when a tragedy like this happens, it's normal to feel sad and anxious, and to want to make sense of the situation.

How Safe Are Schools?

It's actually safer to be in school than in a car. Twice as many 15- to 19-year-olds die in car accidents than in shootings (and that's all shootings, not just the ones that happen in schools). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) less than 1% of all homicides among school-age children happen on school grounds or on the way to and from school. So the vast majority of students will never experience violence at school.

Still, some schools have re-evaluated their safety needs in response to the concerns of families and communities. Some now require that guests check in at the office or have more guards on duty. Some schools have installed metal detectors.

Another thing that helps make schools safer is greater awareness of problems like bullying and discrimination. Many schools have implemented programs to fight these problems and to help teachers and administrators know more about protecting students from this type of violence.

Why Does It Happen?

School violence isn't easy to understand. There is no single reason why students become violent. Some are just following behavior they've seen at home, on the streets, or in video games, movies, or television. Sometimes, people who turn violent are victims of teasing who've hit a limit and feel like they would do

anything to make it stop. They may feel isolated and rejected by their peers. These are only a couple of the reasons why a person may become violent.

There's one thing experts do agree on, though: Having access to guns or other weapons makes it easier for some people to lash out against the things or people they don't like.

What Can I Do?

Someone on the verge of violence usually displays warning signs, which can include:

- * playing with weapons of any kind
- * bragging about acts of violence he or she would like to commit
- * showing an obsession with violent movies or playing violent games
- * bullying or threatening other people
- * cruelty to pets or other animals

If you start feeling unsafe at school, talk to a trusted adult. That person could be a teacher, parent, school counselor, or religious leader. It can be difficult to report violence – after all, we are taught not to rat on others. But lots of schools have set up ways to report bullying or the possibility of violence anonymously. Maybe your school has (or could set up) an anonymous hotline for people to share concerns without worrying that they may be found telling on another student.

If you've witnessed or experienced violence of any kind, not talking about it can make feelings build up inside and cause problems. There's even a condition, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), that can develop in someone who has lived through a traumatic event, such as a serious car accident, physical or sexual abuse, or a shooting.

You don't have to be hurt to experience PTSD – for some people, simply watching a traumatic event or being threatened with great physical harm is enough to trigger it. That's why it's important to get help. School counselors can be a good place to start – they're familiar with the issues in your school and can help you put things in perspective.

This information was compiled by
http://www.kidshealth.org/teen/school_jobs/bullying/school_violence.html