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What Can Parents And Individuals Do To Protect Our Youth?

Tom Lee

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A weekly question/answer column

What Can Parents And Individuals Do To Protect Our Youth?

Tom Lee answers:*

Now is a good time to renew our commitment to strengthen our youth, our families and our communities to prevent violence and promote the positive development of our youth. Here are five areas that can make a difference:

- As parents, grandparents, teachers and others who care about children, we need to remember to live our lives as if someone is watching us – because someone is. Our youth are constantly watching how we deal with frustration, anger and conflict. The next time you consider talking or acting violently, think about the lesson you are teaching.
- Video games, the Internet, movies and popular music all have the potential to influence youth. Take the time to sit down with your children and discuss their entertainment choices. Limit TV, video games and computer time and encourage other activities such as reading individually and together.
- In our materialistic society, it may seem that to be a good parent you must give your children everything. But the most important things in parenting aren't things, they are time and attention. To a child, these are the most valuable of all. Take the time to be involved in your child's activities and in their education.
- Peers have a lot of influence with children, but they still look to parents and other adults for guidance about important decisions and values. Take time to talk about your values. There are opportunities every day at home, church, school and in the neighborhood for concerned adults to teach the values of respect for the rights of others, responsibility for one's actions and nonviolence as the best way to solve problems.
- Children aren't born knowing how to get along with others. They learn through countless experiences at home, school, church and youth groups. Help children learn how to live with kindness and respect for others.
- Bad things can happen in good communities, but the more we do to make our communities great places for youth, the less likely those bad things are to happen.

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