

Parental Violence Quiz

By Barrington H. Brennen, May 4, 2005

Are you a violent parent? If your children would choose just one word to describe you as a parent, what word would that be? Bossy, bully, grumpy, "bigotty," rough, mean, kind, gentle, sweet, or loving. Too many parents are not kind and gentle with their children. They believe that to get the maximum results from their children, they must scream, shout, push, and call them shaming names. Some parents are not even aware how they are damaging their children's lives. Their loud, boisterous, shouts just seem to come naturally to them. This is why it is important that you answer the "Parental Violent Quiz" below.

It is my opinion that parents' behavior toward their children is the reason for the violence in our country today. For generations we have used negative parenting styles that have reaped havoc in the lives of our children. The authoritarian, military type parenting style, where the child is shamed more than praised and "should be seen and not heard" has caused great damage to our families and the society.

This is obvious today in the seemingly uncontrollable, angry behavior of our teenagers and young adults. Show me an angry, uncontrollable, always-getting-in-to-trouble teenager, and I will show you a rigid, inflexible, delinquent parent. Show me a habitually violent teenager and I will show you a violent parent. Is it the teenager we must focus on to change his/her maladaptive behavior, or is it the parent with the non-productive parenting style?

Experience, wisdom, and research indicate that the variable we can change now is parenting styles. It is easier and cost effective to change parenting styles than to reformat the maladaptive behavior of teenagers. That is the only hope for the country. This does not mean that programs and institutions cannot be used to help reform troubled youth. They must be used. However, it does mean that the success we will have in transforming maladaptive behavior will be determined by the attitude of and behavior of parents themselves.

Are you a violent parent? As I explained in the previous article, "Intimate Partner Violence Quiz," the word violent can be replaced with the word "abuse." Violence can be physical (hitting, slapping, pushing, pinching, etc.) or non-physical (verbal, emotional, intimidation, etc.). The questionnaire below will help you to detect whether you are a violent or a non-violent parent. Remember, the questionnaire is not intended to replace professional assessment or treatment. It is only designed to help you think about your behavior as a parent towards your child. The first part of the questionnaire, Parental Attitude, is so you can think about your attitudes and feelings toward your child. It is upon this backdrop that you respond physically or verbally in a violent manner. Respond to the statements below with an open mind.

Parental Attitude:

1. I resent my child.
2. My child gets on my nerves.
3. I wish I did not have a child.
4. I hate my child.
5. I feel very angry toward my child.
6. I feel ashamed of my child.
7. My child irritates me.

8. I have very little tolerance for my child's foolish behavior.
9. I have very little patience.
10. I frequently get drunk or high on drugs.
11. I usually refuse to help my child when she gets hurt.
12. I think my child is a dummy.
13. I believe that beating a child is the only and best way for effective correction of wrong doing.
14. While growing up, my parent(s) called me names and often beat me, leaving cuts and bruises on my skin.
15. While growing up my parents seldom or never hugged, kissed, or said encouraging words to me.

If you answered yes to at least three of these statements, you might be an emotionally violent parent and have a greater risk of becoming physically violent. It is important that you seek further assessment and treatment from a professional.

Parental Behavior

1. I scream and shout at my child.
2. I usually call my child names like "stupid" or "dummy" when I am not satisfied with his behavior or emotional or academic performance.
3. I tell my child "you will never make it in life."
4. I tell my child "you are just like your no-good father" or similar statements.
5. I very seldom hug and kiss my child.
6. I have difficulty commending my child for the good things she does around the house.
7. I ignore my child's feelings when he is hurting. Instead I often say, "you will get over it."
8. I physically punish my child each time he disobeys.
9. I use a piece of wood, tree branch, or belt buckle to beat my child.
10. When beating my child, I am usually very angry.
11. I often slap my child in the face when I feel she has embarrassed me.
12. I force my child to eat when he refuses to eat a meal.
13. I use the words, "I will kill you," when my child makes me angry.
14. I push and shove my child in harsh ways.
15. I lock my child in a room for long periods at a time refusing to provide food or listen to her side of the story.
16. When my child cries because of my beating her, I continue to beat demanding that the crying ceases.
17. I make my child wash his mouth with bleach when he lies to saying mean things.
18. I physically punish my child if he does not make good grades in school.
19. I have forced or seduced my child into having sex with me.
20. I play with my child's genitals for my personal gratification.

If you answered yes to any of these statements, you might be a violent parent and should seek further assessment and treatment from a professional.

PARENTS ARE OUR ONLY HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

It is imperative that parents realize that they hold the key to a non-violent society. The angry outbursts and violent behavior that have been occurring on our school campuses and communities are a direct result of angry or lazy parents who refuse to honor and respect their own children. Violent behavior first starts with the tongue. Parents need to learn how to talk so their children will listen, and listen so their children will talk. Angry parental outbursts can often be described by these words of a hurting child: "Mom and Dad you're talking so loudly, I cannot hear you." Far too many parents ignore how

violent their tongues are, causing severe emotional laceration and permanent wounds. Psalms 52:4 says: "The tongue deviseth mischief, like a sharp razor working deceitfully." Parents who consider themselves Christians are often the most violent towards their erring children. They speak words of discouragement and shame when their child disobeys. James 1:26 states: "If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless." Ephesians 6:4 (*New Living Translation*) makes it even clearer: "And now a word to you fathers (and mothers): Don't make your children angry by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction approved by the Lord."

Child rearing does not come naturally to anyone. You are not a great parent by default. It calls for diligent study, wisdom, and knowledge. Take the time to think about what has been written in this article. You might be the nucleus for the beginning of a non-violent community. To have a non-violent nation, we must first have non-violent parents. Let it begin with you.

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