

Adolescent Violence Towards Parents

Adolescent violence towards parents is increasingly prevalent in our community. A contributing factor is likely to be the result of changes to parenting styles over the last number of decades. Many parents have, to the benefit of children, reduced the use of physical violence as a way of disciplining children. Whilst this change has been very positive, many parents find themselves without knowledge of alternate ways to reinforce their expectations of children's behaviour. Without this reinforcement, children's behavior is likely to deteriorate. As these children develop into teenagers and conflict between parents and teenagers increases, the lack of discipline may contribute to teenagers increasingly using violence against their parents.

Adolescent violence towards parents may also develop if children have witnessed violence within a parental relationship. Often children and teenagers in these situations have learnt pro-violent attitudes, beliefs and behaviours from the perpetrators of violence and may continue the violence after the original perpetrator has left the relationship.

Adolescent violence towards parents may include:

- Verbal abuse
- Physical violence
- Damaging property
- Violence to pets
- Violent threats

If your life is being impacted by violence from your adolescent it may be helpful to:

- Seek advice on how to develop ways of effectively responding to violence without using violence yourself.
- Establish an understanding within the family that from this point on, violence from anyone in the family is not acceptable.
- As the parent, plan how you are going to manage your life and relationships without using any form of violence.

- Apologize for any times you have used violence and accept that your behavior was unacceptable. Discuss any family violence to which your adolescent has been exposed. Listen to his/her feelings and thoughts about that violence and reinforce the message that violence was an unacceptable way of dealing with those situations.
- In relation to your adolescent's behaviour, plan how you will respond to:
 - behaviour that requires a consequence
 - behaviour that can be ignored
 - behaviour that needs to be rewarded
- It is important that your adolescent receives a consistent response to violent behaviour, that they know it will no longer be tolerated and that they know if the violence continues they will no longer be able to live at home.
- Help all family members to develop positive ways to deal with difference and conflict.
- Once violence has reduced it may be helpful to then identify and address the issues that are causing family conflict and adolescent grievances.
- Learn to notice and comment upon the positive aspects and qualities of your adolescent.
- Identify opportunities for your family to share positive times together and work towards making these times part of your family life.

Please feel free to contact Life Supports on 1300 735 030 if you would like to discuss your situation with a professional counsellor. You can find more information about Life Support's services by visiting www.lifesupports.com.au.