

The police say that if there were not so many guns and knives around, there would not be so many murders. Why is this so? It is hard to kill someone with your fists. Unfortunately, it is all too easy to kill someone with a gun or a knife.

The police say that if people did not drink so much there would be fewer murders. Why is this? It is because when people drink they lose control of their behavior. They cannot think clearly. They do things they would not do if they were not drunk. That is why alcohol, like a gun, can be a kind of weapon.

Many community groups are trying to control guns and drinking by helping people understand the problems that they cause. The police say that they have a hard time doing anything about the violence between people who know each other. That is why the community needs to help. Police cannot break up every fight that happens in someone's kitchen or living room.

You can keep yourself from getting into fights. This will not stop all of the family violence in your community, but it could keep you from being hurt or even murdered someday. It could also keep you from hurting somebody else. It could keep you out of prison.

Why should you stop fighting? Many people think that not fighting means you are frightened. There are times when you may have to fight to defend or protect yourself—to keep safe. However, most of the time, you do not need to fight. It probably takes more courage not to fight than to fight. Think about it!

Because so many people have the wrong idea that fighting is the only way or the best way to solve problems, they make fun of those who do not fight. These people are wrong. These people are not smart.

If you think about friends you know who have been badly hurt in fights, what were the fights about? Would you have given up your life for those reasons? Can you imagine going to prison for those reasons? After all, almost everyone who acts in a violent way toward someone they know gets caught and punished.

Many fights start out small and become more serious. They escalate. Violence becomes possible. Then, in a while, the murder can happen.

Kevin S. and his friend Tyrone had been arrested two years before for robbing another student. Tyrone thought information Kevin had given the police about the past crime had gotten Tyrone convicted. Tyrone had been angry with Kevin ever since and had threatened Kevin several times. Kevin said that he believed he had to kill Tyrone in order to protect himself. Kevin shot him in the hallway of their high school.

The jury believed that Kevin was very frightened. There was evidence that he was about to change his mind when the gun went off. He was convicted of manslaughter instead of murder and must now serve many years in prison. At the trial, the mother of the victim screamed, "Somebody has to get him—he killed my son!" She was very angry at the jury for only convicting him of manslaughter when her son was dead.



CRITICAL THINKING

Why is it that talking through conflict can leave both people satisfied, but that using violence leaves nobody satisfied? How can role-play help to solve conflict?

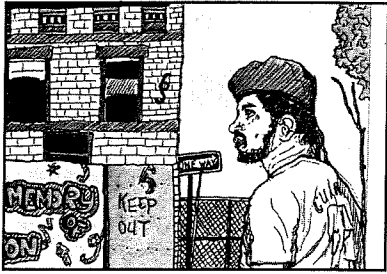
DID YOU KNOW? There are certain ages when young people are much more at risk of being involved in criminal activity, partly because of peer pressure.

EYE OPENER According to the Uniform Crime Reports for the U.S., the total number of arrests for fourteen-year-olds was more than 500,000, while the number for fifteen-year-olds dropped to 270,000. For sixteen-year-olds, it rose to 326,000 and continued to rise until age nineteen. After that, numbers again began to fall.



CRITICAL THINKING
Do you think that a crime is a separate, single incident or part of a larger community problem?

Why?



Do you think this trial was really the end of a crime that started two years ago—when two friends decided to commit a robbery? Do you think anyone else connected to these two young men might get hurt in the future?

How can you stop fighting? Cool down and calm down. Arguing often builds into fighting and violence. Less fighting means less crime. Here are some things that you can do to stop fighting. People who are trained in **martial arts** like judo or tae kwon do say that these steps really work! Practice them for yourself—especially when you almost in a fight situation.

1. Take a deep breath. Relax before you say anything. Speak softly and slowly in low tones.
2. Keep your body relaxed. Check that your hands are not in a tight fist. Make sure you do not look as if you will hit someone.
3. Decide to let go of the anger. It's not worth it. Think of your anger as a package. Throw the package away. Some people will start a fight if someone just steps on their sneakers, pushes against them in the hallway, or says something nasty. What if somebody says something nasty about your mother? Doesn't she want you alive and in school? If you fight and get hurt or suspended from school, will she be happy? Think about it.
4. Do something that is not expected. This means that the other person will expect you to do one thing, so do another. The person may expect you to be ready to fight or to be very frightened. If you are friendly and relaxed, it will confuse the person. There will probably be no fight as a result.

Can you think of a way to let the other person leave without feeling like a coward? The other person might be worried about how he looks to friends. What if you just apologized or said, "Excuse me"? It would not mean that you were wrong and the other person was right. It would just mean that you understood that the person was upset. Try it.

5. Listen to what the other person is saying. Really try to understand what the person is saying. Many times we do not really listen to other people. We are too busy thinking of what we will say or do next. Practice listening with your friends and with your enemies. Tell yourself that you can find a solution to the problem. Also, convince the other person that you can find a solution to it.

How can you make your school safer? Many schools have mediation programs. You learned about some of them in Chapter 17. What do mediators do? They listen to each person in the argument tell their story. But there are rules for talking. The rules are these:

1. No name calling
 2. No cursing or swearing
 3. Only one person can talk at a time, while the other person listens
- After everyone has listened to everyone else, they agree on what to do next. For example, a high school boy threw a piece of chalk at a girl. She

DID YOU KNOW? The recipe for gang life often includes the following ingredients: fighting, drug abuse, gun violence, prison, and death.

EYE OPENER In the United States, homicide is the eleventh leading cause of death and the fourth leading cause of years of life lost. This according to Dr. Deborah Smith.

called him names. He called her names. They threatened each other. At lunchtime, she started to call members of her gang. People talked about weapons and violence.

The principal called the boy and the girl into her office and gave them a choice. They could let a mediator work with them, or they could be suspended. They agreed to mediate with a sixteen-year-old classmate. It took an hour to talk about how angry they both were. At the end, they signed a contract to stop fighting and to tell their gangs to go home.

“Mediation has cut our suspension rate in half,” says the school principal. If your school has a mediation program, find out more about it. Mediation is for everybody. If your school does not have a mediation program, find out what programs there are in your city. Find out if your school can become part of one. Mediation works!

How can you stop your friends from getting hurt? Many times, people let a fight grow because they do not want to look weak in front of their friends. But you can help your friends by helping to cool things down. Letting them know that you do not think it is weak to walk away; It is smart and strong.

For example, a friend is angry because of something someone says. He wants you to come along to find that person. You can say, “It’s not worth it. Let’s go play ball.” You could be saving someone’s life. You do this by being nonviolent.



CRITICAL THINKING

Fights do not just happen. Certain steps lead up to them. What are some of these steps? Think about the role of emotions, peer pressure, and signs of trouble that do not involve words.

DID YOU KNOW? Gang activity, and all of the violence and drug crimes that are part of it, is spreading like wildfire from large cities to small towns and farm areas. This is the happening because of gang networks or systems that have been set up over large areas by member gangs.

Understanding Chapter 18

1. Why is it important to know how to keep fights from becoming serious?
2. What are three things you can do to cool things down?
3. What are the rules for mediation?



Workbook

Self-Check p.38

Reality-Check p.39



TO LEARN MORE

*The Peoples Guide to:
Drug Education*, pp. 3-5, 12-19, 33-36, 90-92

Chapter 18. pages: 89,90 &91.

1. What do the police say causes so many murders? _____

2. Drinking causes people to do things _____

3. Community groups are trying to control what? _____

4. Police have a hard time with violence between _____

5. Staying out of fights could keep you from _____

6. Many people have the idea that fighting is the only way so they make fun of _____
7. Almost everyone that acts in a violent way toward someone they know _____
8. Why did Kevin believe he had to kill Tyrone in order to protect himself?

9. What did the mother of Tyrone feel at Kevin's trial? _____

10. Arguing often builds into _____
11. How does taking a deep breath help? _____

12. How should your hands be? _____

14. What can you do to confuse the other person? _____

15. What does the phrase "Excuse me" mean?

16. When we listen to the other person, what should we try to do?

17. What should be the rules in school mediation programs:

A.

B.

C.

18. At lunchtime what did the girl do? _____

19. What choice did the principal give them? _____

20. Why do many times people let a fight grow? _____

Critical Thinking

(pages: 89,90 & 91)

1. Can talking through a problem leave both people satisfied?
How?

2. What causes young people to be more at risk to commit a crime?

3. Why do you think the number of arrests begin to fall after age 20?

4. Is crime in Columbia separate incidents or part of a larger community problem? Why?

5. What should the community take steps to stop first? How?

6. What are some steps that start fights?

7. How can you stop your friends from getting involved in violence?