

# HELPING HAND

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## Programs Can Teach Children to Eat Healthier

A recent study of pre-adolescent children found that those who attended a nutrition education program and were taught to follow a diet low in saturated fat and dietary cholesterol adopted significantly better dietary habits over several years compared to their peers who received only general nutritional information.

The study showed that, after three years, children in the intervention group consumed more than 67% of their total calories on average from heart-healthy foods, compared to less than 57% for children in the usual care group. The results are from recent findings of the Dietary Intervention Study in Children (DISC). Scientists studied children who were ages 8 to 10 and who had high blood cholesterol levels at the start of the study. The researchers analyzed dietary information by food groups and measured adherence to recommended food patterns and changes over time.

"These new findings offer valuable lessons for finding effective ways to help children develop healthier eating habits — a critical need in light of the rising rates of obesity and related conditions among children," said Elizabeth G. Nabel, MD, director of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), which sponsored the study. NHLBI is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

The study provides glimpses of real-world eating behavior and reveals the challenges of trying to eat a healthy diet in a fast-paced world. For example, the study documents a long-



suspected phenomenon of modern society: approximately one-third of the total daily calories consumed by the children in both groups came from snack foods, desserts, and pizza.

Experts added that with the right guidance and nutrition education, children learn to prefer healthy foods such as carrots and raisins or cereal as snacks, for example.

Eva Obarzanek, PhD, RD, NHLBI nutritionist and DISC project officer, agrees that most children could benefit from healthier eating patterns like those followed by DISC participants. "DISC has shown that following a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol is safe for children in this age group — and a heart-healthy diet can lower blood cholesterol levels," she noted.

# Does Violence Beget Violence?

A recent study offered scientific proof of what some have already deduced: teens exposed to violence are more likely than their peers to become involved in violence in the future.

Specifically, the study found that adolescents who witness gun violence or are the victim of gun violence are twice as likely as their peers to commit serious violence during the following two years after their exposure. "The primary implication of these findings is that violence can be transmitted from person to person by means of exposure in the community," study author Jeffrey B. Bingenheimer, a doctoral candidate at the University of Michigan's School of Public Health, said.

If, as this finding and other research suggests, "violence begets violence," the implications of increasing rates of violent crime along with adolescent exposure to violence, are troubling, the report states.

Bingenheimer and his team arrived at their finding from information collected over a five-year period from



hundreds of adolescents involved in the long-term Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods.

Overall, teens who reported witnessing or being a victim of violence were more likely than the unexposed group to say they had used alcohol and drugs, had engaged in general delinquency and property crimes, had been physically abused, and had family members with criminal records. They also had lower vocabulary and reading scores and tended to live in more disadvantaged neighborhoods with higher levels of physical and social disorder. Such factors have previously been shown to predict violent behavior, Bingenheimer and his team note.

(SOURCE: *Science Magazine*, May 2005)

## Look Out for Common Signs of Drug and Alcohol Abuse

Parents and teachers often have a difficult time discerning between typical teenage moodiness and behaviors indicative of drug and alcohol use. Regardless of mood swings, the signs and symptoms of teenage drug use may be obvious to knowledgeable parents and other adults.

There's no universal stereotype for a teen user, and even if no behavioral symptoms present themselves, an educated adult who can spot drug paraphernalia and knows the drug lingo is better equipped to confront a teen. Identifying such items as bong, pipes, inhalants, plastic bags, pills, and posters promoting drug and/or alcohol use is a good way to intervene early and prevent a teen's further use.

Unfortunately, even the most involved adults may one day find themselves in a situation where a teen is displaying obvious signs of drug use, such as declining grades or drug paraphernalia. The best thing for adults to do under these circumstances is to confront the child and be firm about not allowing such behavior. Parents should clearly state their disappointment about drug use and thoroughly discuss the consequences.



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# Mental Illness Exacts Heavy Toll, Beginning in Youth

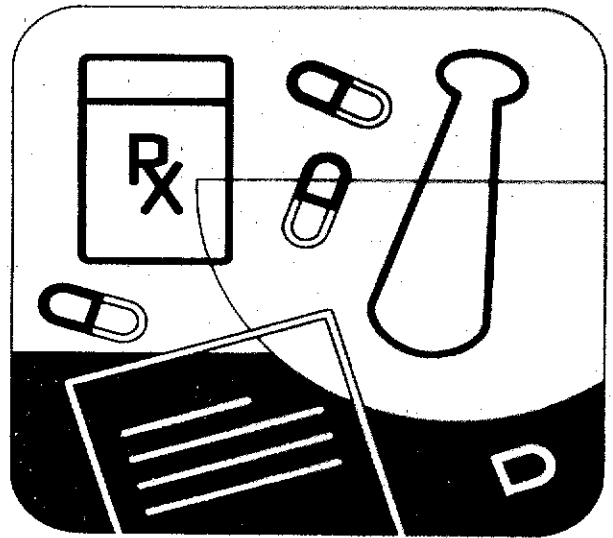
**R**esearchers supported by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) have found that half of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14, and that, despite effective treatments, there are long delays — sometimes decades — between first onset of symptoms and when people seek and receive treatment. The study also reveals that an untreated mental disorder can lead to a more severe, more difficult to treat illness, and to the development of co-occurring mental illnesses.

The landmark study is described in four papers that document the prevalence and severity of specific mental disorders. The papers provide significant new data on the impairment — such as days lost from work — caused by specific disorders, including mood, anxiety, and substance abuse disorders.

These measures will allow researchers to determine the degree of disability and the economic burden caused by mental illness, as well as trends over time.

The papers are presented in the June 6 issue of the *Archives of General Psychiatry* by Ronald Kessler, PhD, and colleagues. The study was a collaborative project between Harvard University, the University of Michigan, and the NIMH Intramural Research Program.

“These studies confirm a growing understanding about the nature of mental illness across the lifespan,” says Thomas Insel, MD, Director of the National Institute of Mental Health. “There are many important messages from this study, but perhaps none as important as the recognition that mental disorders are the chronic disorders of young people in the US.”



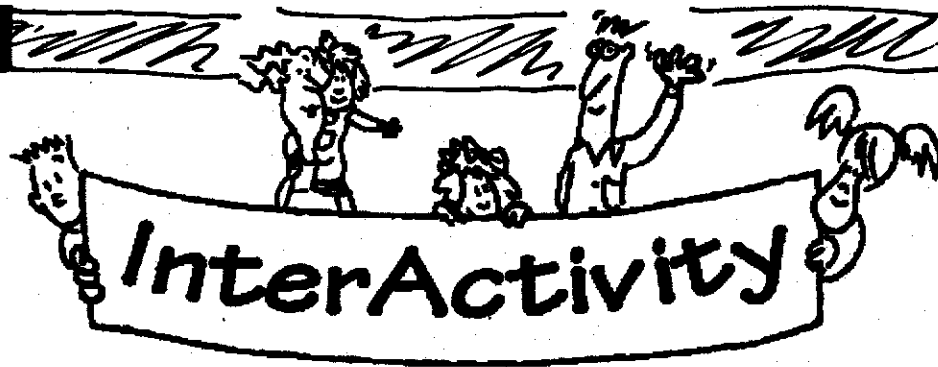
## Helping Children Cope with Trauma

Recently, current events like Hurricanes Katrina and Rita may have children of all ages feeling nervous, upset, anxious and worried. The American Counseling Association (ACA) offers the following advice to help children cope with trauma. After any disaster, children are most afraid that the event will recur, that they or someone they love will be hurt or killed, that they may be separated from those they love and be left alone. Here are ways that you can help children cope with trauma:

1. Children under the age of six should not be exposed to the TV videotape coverage of the attacks, and the viewing time allowed older children should be limited.
2. Allow children to express their feelings about what has happened and share your feelings with them. Regressive behavior like thumb-sucking may occur in response to the trauma. Do not punish or scold the child for the behavior, but instead try to help him or her put their feelings into words.
3. Reassure children that they are now safe.
4. Be honest with children about what has occurred and provide facts about what happened. Children usually know when something is being sugar-coated.
5. Try to return to your normal routine. This helps provide a sense of security and safety.

6. Spend extra time with children, especially doing fun or relaxing activities.
7. Review safety procedures so children will feel prepared the next time an emergency situation occurs.
8. Teachers, parents, daycare providers and others should keep an open discourse so they understand how the child has been affected.
9. Watch for signs of repetitive play in which children re-enact all or part of the disaster. Although excessive re-enactment of a traumatic experience may be a warning sign, this behavior is an appropriate form of expression of emotions. Encourage a child who is not able to articulate their express their feelings through coloring, drawing, or painting.
10. Praise and recognize responsible behavior and reassure children that their feelings are normal in response to an abnormal situation.

*Founded in 1952, the American Counseling Association is the world's largest private, non-profit organization for professional counselors. Dedicated to promoting public confidence and trust in the counseling profession, the American Counseling Association serves nearly 50,000 members in the United States and 50 other countries by providing leadership training, continuing education and advocacy services.*



## The Hand of Friendship

### Objectives:

Students will examine the qualities they most appreciate in their friends.

Students will identify qualities they have that make them a good friend to others.

Students will share with the school community the personal qualities that make them a good friend to others.

### Materials:

Construction paper, pencils, markers, crayons, and a teacher model of the project.

### Instructions:

Ask students to share some of the qualities they most appreciate in their friends. Record the responses on the board.

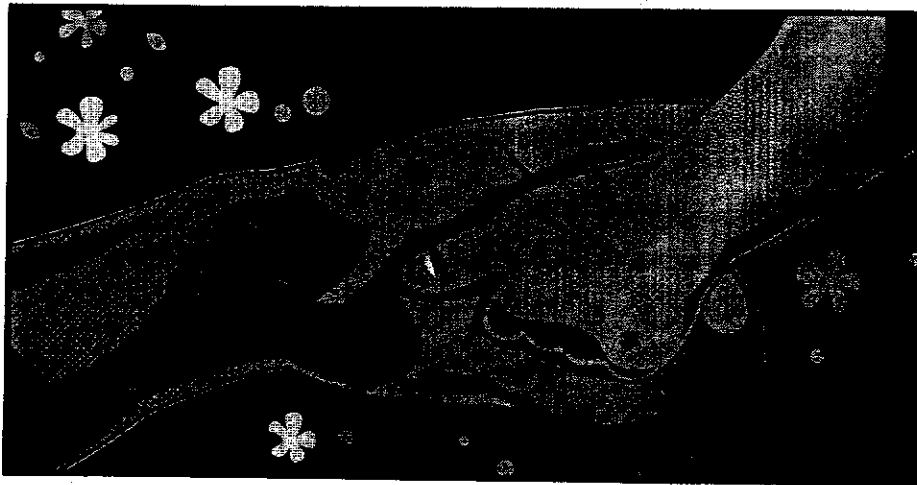
Next, ask the students if their friends would agree that they have some of those same qualities.

Discuss how these qualities are expressed in friendship (e.g. spending time with a friend, helping a friend, helping a friend understand the homework).

Distribute art supplies. Instruct students to trace their handprint onto the construction paper. Ask students to pick the one word on the board that best describes the quality that makes them a good friend. Invite them to illustrate that quality on their paper hands using the art supplies.

Place the students' "Hands of Friendship" on a bulletin board or main hallway.

(Source: [www.mixitup.org](http://www.mixitup.org))



**For more information, contact:**

**For more information about Chippewa Valley Schools' Student Assistance (drug and violence prevention) programming, please call 586/723-2360.**