

# Try These Autumn Activities With Your Kids

## Family Living Focus

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**Parents Can Help Stop Violence Before It Starts**  
Violence is the act of purposefully hurting someone. It's a major issue facing today's youth and young adults.

Youth violence escalated sharply during the 1990's, resulting in harsh consequences for the youth involved, their families, and their communities.

There is no single explanation for the overall rise in youth violence. Sometimes violence results from a conflict over something small, such as a mistaken gesture or look, or talking to a member of a rival group.

For others, violence is a way to release feelings of anger or frustration. Violence may be used to manipulate or control others; or it may be a method of retaliation against those who have caused hurt.

Youth who demonstrate acts of violence may require the help of a trained professional.

Parents, however, can create an environment for young children that will decrease the likelihood that youth will engage in acts of violence. Don't underestimate the power of parents. The little "lessons of life" taught by parents everyday can be major steps toward stopping the tendency toward violence in youth and young adults. The following are some suggestions from the National Association of Social Workers (100 Ways You Can Stop Violence):

- Make a child smile today.
- Be an exception of somebody's stereotype of you.
- Be slow to anger, slow to accuse, quick to tolerate.
- Use courtesy — its disarming.
- Say hello to your neighbor.
- Talk to your children.

- Write a letter protesting a violent television program.
- Perform random acts of kindness.

- Teach your children to recognize and appreciate differences among people.

- Monitor your children's TV programs, movies, and video and computer games.

- Teach your children to respect themselves and others.

- Learn about your own cultural heritage from your parents or grandparents. Teach it to your children.

- Learn to speak Spanish or Greek or Swahili or any language new to you.

- Use humor.
- Treat your children as you wish you had been treated.

- Avoid a conflict. Usually it's not worth it to argue.

- Be responsible for your own actions.

- Be a good example of tolerance.

- Learn to walk in another's shoes.

- Curb disparaging remarks.

- Watch your own anger — talk it out, write it out, sing it out, but don't act it out.

- Contact a local university. Ask a foreign student to spend Thanksgiving with your family.

- Hug your kids.

- Dress in ethnic clothing from your own background or someone else's for a day.

- Practice patience.

- Take a deep breath and count to ten.

- Take time to do one favor for someone every day.

- Fix the problem, not the blame.

- Don't get discouraged.

"Hope is like a road in the country. There never was a road, but when many people walk the same path, a road comes into existence."

**UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.)** — As the days get shorter, Jim Van Horn, family life specialist in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences, suggests some inexpensive, educational fun for kids.

### Ages 2-3

- Adopt a grandparent. Children with faraway grandparents might enjoy "adopting" an older person (or persons) in the neighborhood who don't have grandkids nearby. They can make them cards and gifts, visit them and remember them at holidays.

- Build a railroad train. Read Watt Piper's "The Little Engine That Could" or Lois Lenski's "The Little Train." Line up cardboard boxes and let your children decorate them to look like the engine, caboose, etc. Give them bells, horns, pieces of paper for tickets and a hole punch for the conductor. If there are trains nearby, take your child where you can safely watch them.

- Go for a walk and use your nose. A "discovery smell walk" can be creative and educational. Take your child to fragrant places like gas stations, grocery stores and plant nurseries.

- Make colored milk. Flavor milk with a little vanilla and honey and let your child pick the food coloring. Infants under age two should not use honey because it may contain botulism toxins.

- Visit the farmer's market. Roadside stands and farmer's markets can be fun places to visit and talk about the changes in seasons. Choose a pumpkin or some crunchy apples to take home.

- Stringing objects (kids over 2-years-old). Lay out objects in pie pans, like beads, various pastas and short pieces of plastic straws. Provide plastic laces or yarn and large dull needles.

- Fall yard and garden clean-up. Kids can help pull dried-up vegetables and flowers and save flower seeds for next year's garden. Marigold seeds are easy to remove. Kids also can help turn

the soil with a shovel, rake leaves and harvest fall vegetables.

### Ages 4-6

- Dress-up box. Fill a large box with old clothes, shoes, hats, etc. Old wedding dresses, prom dresses and men's suits are fun. See who can dress up in the funniest costume.

- Pretend visit. Invite your children to knock on the door of your home for a pretend visit. Offer juice and a snack. Ask about work and the kids. Afterwards, they can pretend to leave.

- Make apple pudding. Place 1 cup cooked rice in a bowl. Let your child stir in 1 cup applesauce, 1 teaspoon cinnamon, 1 cup low-fat vanilla yogurt, then spoon the pudding into dishes.

- Spider house. Punch small holes in the lid of a large glass jar. Fill with two-inches of sand or dirt. Stand a twig (for the web) in the sand so it nearly reaches the top or leans against the side. Add a cotton ball and moisten it every fourth day. Add a spider (check a spider book to be sure what you have). Spiders shouldn't be kept more than a couple of weeks since it's hard to feed them.

- Paper plate masks. Punch a hole in each side of a paper plate and tie yarn or string to them. Mark the nose and eye holes and cut them out. Cut out the bottom of a paper cup and tape it over the nose. Decorate the face with construction paper ears, crayons, hair, fur, etc.

- Tissue ghost puppets. Tuck four cotton balls in the center of an extra large facial tissue. Cinch a rubber band around the cotton to form a head. Draw a face with a marker, then place an index finger through the rubber band and slightly into the head with the tissue covering your hand.

- Sharing with others. Your family can show that they care by sharing outgrown clothing and food. Sort and donate clothes to groups like the Salvation Army and churches. Donate food to food banks. Call the Humane Society or S.P.C.A. to see if they'd like pet food or newspapers.

- Sketch a community map. If available, compare old maps to up-to-date maps of your town. Sketch and title a map that shows how to get from your house to the school, library, etc. Draw a legend in the corner that defines your marks (e.g. traffic lights).

- Pick your own apples. Check the newspaper or phone directory for a pick-your-own orchard and find out when they are open. Explore the orchard, picking equipment, cider press, apple sorter, etc. Enjoy the smells and compare the various kinds of apples.

- Clay leaf prints. Flatten a lump of clay on foil with a rolling pin. Place a leaf on the clay and roll over it. Remove the leaf and let the clay dry. Paint it with tempera if desired.

- Glycerin leaves. On several layers of newspaper, hammer the end of a small branch of leaves until slightly crushed. In a jar, mix one part glycerin (from drug store) with two parts water. Place the pounded end of the branch as you would a bouquet into the glycerin mixture for two weeks to preserve the leaves.

- Sketching and photographing animals. Pets and backyard visitors make ready models that assume countless poses. Patiently wait for your subject to assume the desired pose. Discover, for example, where and when rabbits dine, then wait for them. Make an album of your pictures to share.

- Seed mosaics. Set up plastic dishes of various seeds and beans. Draw a design on cardboard, then fill sections with glue. Sprinkle or place seeds on the glued areas.

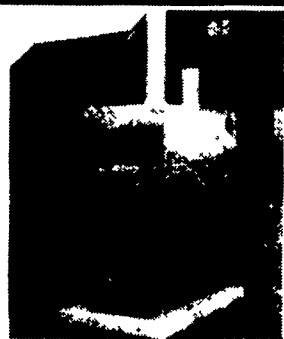
- Picture fun. Clip pictures from magazines, write up funny captions and sent them to friends.

For more information about "Family Time," a program designed to help parents and children spend time together, contact your county Penn State Cooperative Extension office.



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