

## We Can Help

1. By helping families so that they can meet the physical, emotional and intellectual needs of their children.
2. By recognizing and treating aggressive behaviour as soon as it appears. Many violent youth were aggressive children.
3. By ensuring that antisocial youth receive proper assessments and effective treatments.
4. By abandoning the pursuit of harsh punishments. Research has shown that long sentences and harsh punishments do not prevent the recurrence of crime.

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The **INSTITUTE** for the study of  
**ANTISOCIAL** behaviour in **YOUTH**

*and*

The Clarke Institute of Psychiatry

*present some facts about  
violent youth*

**Antisocial and Violent Youth  
DO NOT CHOOSE  
to be Bad**

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The Institute for the study of Antisocial behaviour in Youth (I.A.Y.) is a non-profit organization dedicated to serving professionals and organizations involved in helping antisocial youth, with the ultimate objective of reducing violence in our society.

# Why do some youth commit antisocial and violent acts?

People believe antisocial youth are looking for the good things in life without working for them. There is a great deal of anger towards young people who steal and commit other violent and antisocial acts. This anger arises from the public's belief that antisocial youth could be like other youngsters if they wanted to be and if they tried. Although this anger is justifiable considering the violence committed by youth in recent years, our response has to be guided by the knowledge of what is causing this behaviour and how it can be changed. *The fact is that these youth are not like other youngsters.*

## 1 Many antisocial youth have difficult temperaments from birth.

Babies with difficult temperament are poor sleepers, difficult to feed and hard to toilet train.<sup>1</sup> These babies require extra patience and attention. Research has shown that children with difficult temperaments who grow up in families where there have been serious difficulties, develop emotional and behavioral problems.<sup>2</sup>

## 2 Many antisocial youth suffer from a variety of disabilities.

Learning disabilities, including reading disability, are common occurrences.<sup>3</sup> Lack of recognition of disabilities can cause serious problems to a child's progress and self image.

## 3 Many antisocial youth have serious psychiatric disorders.

The most common is attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), which makes it hard for these youth to do well academically.<sup>4</sup> Impulsiveness is one of the symptoms of ADHD which often contributes to children getting into fights and trouble with the law. ADHD runs in families and has been linked to a *genetic* abnormality.<sup>5</sup>

Besides the above, many antisocial youth have neurological disturbances such as psychomotor epilepsy, and symptoms of psychotic illnesses such as schizophrenia and manic depressive psychosis.<sup>6</sup>

## 4 Many antisocial youth come from families that have experienced a great deal of difficulty and stress.

Children growing up in these families may experience inconsistent discipline, neglect, and physical abuse.<sup>7</sup> There may be a history of mental illness in one or both parents. Very often the difficulties experienced by the families are further aggravated by poverty.<sup>8</sup>

None of the above risk factors by themselves cause young persons to be antisocial. What makes the youth more than likely to be antisocial is the presence of more than 2 or 3 factors. In fact, most antisocial youth have 3 or 4 risk factors present.<sup>9</sup>

Many antisocial youth are unable to meet society's expectations. This may result from their disabilities, disorders and family backgrounds. They find it *difficult* to control their behaviour; they are *unable* to perform well in school; and they have *difficulties* forming close and meaningful relationships.

*It is important to recognize that without help these youth are going to cause a great deal of harm to society through their antisocial and violent behaviour.* Besides causing suffering to their families and society, they cost us millions of dollars through probation, jail, welfare and unemployment.<sup>10</sup>

*The fact is that antisocial youth do not choose to be bad;* with help they are capable of being good. It is in our interest to help them so that, instead of causing pain and expense to society, they can positively contribute.

**How can we help?**