

# Violent



# Crime



### WORDS TO KNOW

violent crime

assault

robbery

domestic violence

sexual assault

rape

restorative justice

conflict resolution

elder victimization

child victimization

drunk driving death and injury

homicide

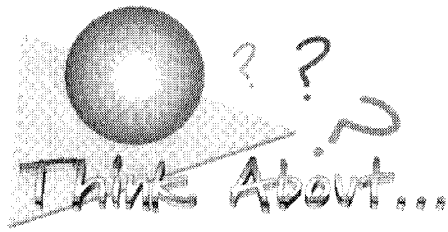
gang violence

restitution

### OBJECTIVES

As a result of this lesson you should be able to:

- define violent crime
- know the characteristics of the most serious crimes
- discuss the myths and realities of violent crimes against persons
- understand the extent to which violent crime is a concern for Americans
- realize the extent to which concerns or fears about crime have affected the way Americans live
- begin to understand the impact of violence on victims of crime
- discuss changes in the way Americans view juvenile justice and gang violence
- utilize strategies for managing conflict other than violence



1. What types of crimes do you think of as being "violent"?
2. How do you think violent crime makes victims feel?
3. How does violent crime affect your community?

## DEFINITIONS: What Is Violent Crime?

**Violent crime**, as used in this text, refers to criminal behavior which may result in death or bodily injury, **including** behavior that involves the threat of death or injury against a person. The acts of homicide, robbery, rape, sexual assault, aggravated assault, simple assault, and domestic violence are classified as violent crimes by the U. S. Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). One of these violent crimes was committed every 16 seconds in the United States in 1993. Child abuse, elder abuse, drunk driving death and injury, and a number of other acts of violence are not recorded as such in statistics, but they are violent, nonetheless.

The following definitions of violent crimes are general. You will be given the specific definitions and laws in your state relating to the various crimes in following chapters.

**Homicide** is the killing of one person by another. There are different kinds of homicide, including murder.

**Rape** is forcing another person to submit to a sexual act against his or her will.

**Sexual assault** is a broader term which may include assault with intent to commit rape, aiding or abetting rape or penetration with a foreign object, taking a person by force to live in an illicit relationship, incest, sodomy, sexually assaulting an animal, and others.

**Robbery** is taking the property of another by the use of violence or intimidation.

**Assault** is committing a violent injury to another person.

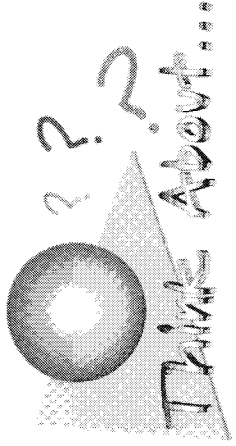
**Aggravated assault** is an attack or attempted attack by one person upon another for the purpose of inflicting severe or aggravated bodily injury. This type of assault is usually accompanied by the use of a weapon or by means likely to produce death or great harm.

**Simple assault** is the attack or attempted attack by one person upon another to inflict less serious bodily injury without a weapon.

**Domestic violence** is physical, mental, or emotional injury intentionally or recklessly committed by one person against another person in an established relationship.

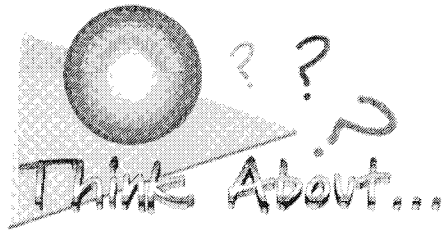
**Child abuse** and **elder abuse** are unique forms of domestic violence categorized separately based on the more vulnerable ages of the victims.

**Drunk driving death and injury** is considered a violent crime rather than an "accident" because the offenders make two irresponsible and negligent choices: to use alcohol or other drugs and to get behind the wheel of a vehicle.



Place a "T" to the left of statements you believe to be primarily true and an "F" to the left of statements you believe to be primarily false.

1. \_\_\_\_ After a homicide is committed, there are no victims because the victim died.
2. \_\_\_\_ Sometimes, assaulting someone is the only way to handle a dispute.
3. \_\_\_\_ The trauma to the victim ends once the crime has been committed.
4. \_\_\_\_ Victims of crime suffer significant economic hardship after a violent crime.
5. \_\_\_\_ Since violent crime is now going down a little, most Americans feel safe.
6. \_\_\_\_ There are about 50,000 criminal victimizations a year.
7. \_\_\_\_ More blacks than whites were arrested for crime in 1994.
8. \_\_\_\_ About 10 % of violent crimes include use of a weapon.
9. \_\_\_\_ Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is an emotional illness suffered primarily by war veterans.
10. \_\_\_\_ Juvenile offenders should not be held accountable for their crimes since they're just kids.



According to Webster's Dictionary, a "disaster" is a "happening that causes great harm or damage, serious or sudden misfortune, or calamity." Using this definition, America is experiencing a health, public safety, and mental health "disaster" at the hands of crime.

- In a survey of 1000 adult Americans, more than four out of five (82%) said they were personally very concerned about violent crime (Kilpatrick, Seymour and Boyle, 1991).
- More Americans are concerned about violent crime and drug abuse than about unemployment, pollution, education, or the government deficit (Kilpatrick et al., 1991).
- Women, in particular, are victimized in large numbers. More than 1/3 of the women in America have been victims of some kind of sexual assault, aggravated assault, or have lost a family member or close friend to homicide or drunk driving. (Resnick, Kilpatrick, Dansky, Saunders, & Best, in press)

**Jot down answers to the following questions and be prepared to discuss your answers in class.**

**1. Why do you think Americans are now so scared of crime?**

**2. Why do you think so many women are hurt or raped?**

## Psychological Trauma of Crime Victims

Most crime victims report that during and after the crime, sometimes for weeks and months, they experience a rapid heart beat and hyperventilation. They feel intense fear, helplessness, and horror. These anxiety reactions -- feeling afraid even though there may not be anything else to be afraid of -- disrupt their ability to concentrate and perform simple tasks. They think about the crime a good bit of the time and have flashbacks and bad dreams. They worry that other people will not believe them when they tell what happened and they are afraid someone will blame them rather than the offender.

Following are the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder:

1. **Continual and ongoing reexperiencing of the event** (distressing dreams, distressing recollections, flashbacks (not just a memory, but feeling as though you were experiencing the crime all over again; flashbacks can include re-experiencing the physical pain as well as the emotional terror) or emotional and/or psychological reactions when exposed to something that is similar to or reminds them of the traumatic event
2. **Continual and ongoing avoidance** of things associated with the traumatic event or reduced ability to be close to other people and have loving feelings
3. **Continual and ongoing symptoms of increased arousal** (difficulties sleeping, outbursts of anger, difficulty concentrating, constantly being on guard, extreme startle response (jumping when hearing a noise)

If these symptoms last at least one month and if the disturbance produces significant distress or impairment of the victims ability to relate socially, to work, or to perform other important tasks, the victim is suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.



Following are some of the things researchers have found out about crime-related post-traumatic stress disorder (Resnick et. al, 1993):

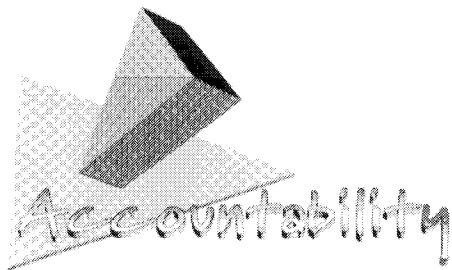
- The chance of getting PTSD following crime is one in four and contrasted with getting PTSD after other traumatic events (one in ten).
- Victims whose crimes resulted in physical injury **or the threat of physical injury or death** were much more likely to suffer from PTSD (45%) than victims whose crimes did not involve life threat or physical injury (19%).

Long-term, crime-related psychological trauma is not limited to PTSD. Compared to people who have not been victimized by crime, they have significantly higher rates of:

- suicidal thinking
- suicide attempts
- developing alcohol or other drug problems
- panic disorders
- agoraphobia (being afraid to leave their homes)

Many experience problems in their relationships with family and friends because they have changed so much. Because of their high levels of crime-related fear, many victims change their lifestyles substantially and restrict their usual activities. They are intensely afraid of being victimized again. If a person has been previously victimized by crime or if the crime has been a serious and dangerous one, his or her need for psychological counseling is great. Yet, only about 1/3 of victims who develop crime-related PTSD ever get any counseling.

**Do you know anyone who you think has crime-related PTSD? Tell your group what happened to him/her.**



Violent crimes have a serious impact on victims and their families. The physical effects of violent crime are always traumatic. Criminal injuries are serious and often permanent. The permanent injuries are a daily painful reminder of the crime. For homicide survivors, their final memory of their lost loved one is always of a violent death.

Severe emotional trauma is also experienced by victims of violent crime and their families. The trauma changes them forever. Few crime victims expected what happened to them, so they were shocked and terrified. Many lose a sense of security and control over their lives. They may question why they or their loved ones were chosen as victims. Many have dreams and flashbacks for a long period of time after the crime has taken place. Many victims and survivors need counseling to deal with the trauma from being a victim of violent crime or from the killing of a loved one.

Violent crime also inflicts serious economic trauma on victims and their families. Injured persons often lose their jobs because they cannot perform adequately after being injured. Emotional trauma causes them to be unable to concentrate and their bosses lose patience with them. Medical care and funerals cost a lot of money. Participating in the criminal justice system is time consuming and expensive for victims. They lose many days of work to attend hearings and the trial. Counseling services are hard to find and expensive. Employers often require sick leave for

victims to go to counseling. Researchers found that victimizations generate \$105 billion annually in property and productivity losses and outlays for medical expenses. This amounts to an annual “crime tax” of roughly \$425 per man, woman and child in the United States. (Travis, 1996).

Put yourself in the place of a violent crime victim and a survivor of homicide and imagine how you would feel. **No one has the right to commit a violent crime against a person or to murder someone, regardless of one's circumstances.**

### Juvenile Crime Offenders

The years between 1988 and 1991 saw a 38% increase in the rate of juvenile arrests for violent crimes. In 1991, juveniles were responsible for 19% of the violent crimes of rape, personal robbery, simple assault and aggravated assault. There was a 128% increase in juvenile arrests for murder between 1983 and 1992. During the same period, the risk that a person between the ages of 12 and 17 would become a victim of a non-fatal violent crime increased 17%. **The number of violent juvenile crime arrests is projected to increase another 22% between 1992 and 2010** (Snyder and Sickmund, 1995).

**What's going on?**

## Gang Violence

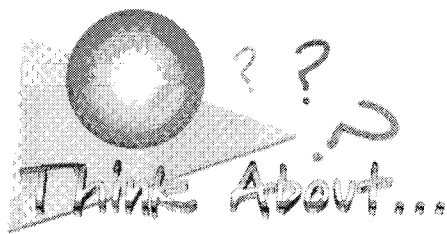
Results of the **1995 National Youth Gang Survey** (Office for Victims of Crime, 1996) were released in June, 1996. The survey found that there are approximately 652,000 gang members in 25,000 gangs nationwide. A survey of Chicago public schools in 1993 found that 40,000 school children had been threatened or attacked by gang members (Roberson, 1994).

The cost to individual victims resulting from drive-by shootings, assault, property damage, drug-related violence, and robberies is felt in all urban communities, as well as many suburban and rural communities. No one can place a dollar amount on the loss of life and the physical and emotional sufferings experienced by gangs' victims.

A **gang** is generally defined as an on-going, organized association of three or more persons, whether formal or informal, who have a common name or common signs, colors or symbols, and members or associates who individually or collectively engage in or have engaged in criminal activity (Conley, 1993).

Two of the most common reasons traditionally given for joining gangs are:

- The breakdown of the family; and
- Poverty



Following is a list of possible reasons for joining gangs. Place an "X" to the left of reasons you believe some young people join gangs.

- ☐ Breakdown of the family
- ☐ Poverty
- ☐ Drug dealing (fast money)
- ☐ Peer pressure
- ☐ Protection from other gangs
- ☐ Generational expectation (My father was in one, so I should be too)
- ☐ Other (\_\_\_\_\_)

After marking your answers, be prepared to discuss your answers in detail. For example, if you marked "Breakdown of the family," does that mean that Dad is absent and Mom has to work all the time, so a kid doesn't have anyone to turn to with his or her problems and therefore looks to a gang for security?

After allowing everyone in your class or group to explain their answers, go back and circle the "X"s you believe are good reasons for joining a gang. Be prepared to support your choices.

## Victims of Gang Violence

Victims of gang-related crime often face unique problems in addition to the trauma of their victimization.

These include:

- There is not just one offender but an entire gang. Therefore, they may face further intimidation or violence if they report to the police.
- Some people think that all victims of gang violence are gang members themselves, and therefore do not sympathize with them.
- Most victims of gang violence live within the same community as their offenders.
- Victim-blaming is abundant. For example, "Why didn't you just move away from that neighborhood?" (As if that would have been a reasonable solution)

**Name some of the crimes gang members are likely to commit. Can you think of other problems victims of these gang-related crimes might have?**

## A Brief History of Juvenile Justice

Historically, criminal justice professionals have believed that juvenile offenders should be treated differently than adult offenders. This was based on the belief that many youthful offenders were errant children who were in need of simple guidance and advice to straighten them out. Most juvenile crime a couple of generations ago consisted of truancy, petty thievery or burglary -- not violent crimes against other persons.

Therefore, youthful offenders had separate courts and separate rules. They were offered special opportunities for rehabilitation. Churches, community groups, and social workers were enlisted to provide guidance and to assist the young person to mend his or her ways. Even today, we use a separate language for juvenile and adult offenders.

Adult Justice System	Juvenile Justice System
Prosecutors	Court Advocates
Convictions	Adjudications
Sentences	Dispositions
"Found Guilty"	"Finding"
Criminals	Wards (delinquents)
Get locked up	Placement
Crimes	Incidents

The public and the courts are now changing their minds about juvenile justice.

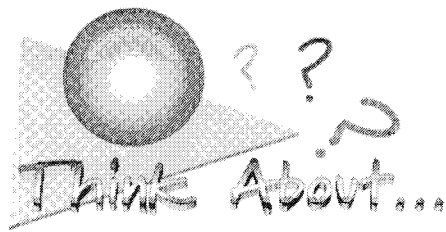
In fact, a new federal law was passed in 1994 which has significantly strengthened sanctions for juvenile offenders. **Why do you think the U.S. Congress passed this new law?**

Following is a summary of the new law.

### *The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994*

- Thirteen and fourteen-year-olds can be prosecuted as adults if they are charged with robbery or aggravated sexual assault committed with a firearm. In determining whether a juvenile should be tried as an adult, the courts are to consider the extent to which the juvenile played a leadership role in an organization, or otherwise influenced others to take part in criminal activities, involving the use of, or distribution of, firearms or drugs.
- It is a federal offense for a juvenile under the age of 18 to knowingly possess a handgun or handgun ammunition. The penalty for juveniles in possession of a handgun or handgun ammunition is probation only if the juvenile has no previous offenses. Otherwise the juvenile may be imprisoned for up to one year.
- Adults who knowingly transfer a handgun or handgun ammunition to a juvenile will be imprisoned for one year. If the adult knew or had reasonable cause to know that the juvenile intended to possess or use the handgun or ammunition in a crime of violence, the maximum penalty is ten years of imprisonment.
- The maximum penalty was tripled for using a minor to distribute drugs around or within 1000 feet of a protected location such as a school, college, playground, or public swimming pool. It also tripled the maximum penalty for using a minor to assist in avoiding detection or apprehension for drug dealing at or near a protected location.





Read the following newspaper clipping which appeared in newspapers throughout the United States in July, 1996.

(Washington DC) Just two days before President Clinton is to announce ways to reduce youth violence, his rival Bob Dole called for getting tough on juvenile criminals to make their records stick with them through life.

"Unless something is done soon, some of today's newborns will become tomorrow's super-predators -- merciless criminals capable of committing the most vicious of acts for the most trivial of reasons," the Republican presidential candidate said yesterday in a weekly radio address.

Dole said one of his last acts before resigning in June was to sponsor legislation that would ensure that juveniles who commit violent federal crimes are prosecuted as adults.

"A violent teenager who commits an adult crime should be treated as an adult in court and should receive adult punishment," he said. "Teenagers who rape, rob and murder should not be automatically released when they turn 18 or 20."

Dole also called for making juvenile criminal records available to schools courts and some employers even after a juvenile becomes an adult.

"Thirty-five percent of all violent crime is now committed by offenders less than 20 years of age," Dole said, noting that the murder rate among 14- to 17-year-olds more than doubled between 1985 and 1994.

"It wasn't that long ago that we started worrying about children having children. Today we're also worried about children killing children."...(The Associated Press, July 7, 1996)

1. What is your reaction to the article?

2. Do you believe that juveniles and adults should continue to have separate justice systems?

Jot down notes to help you defend your answer in class.



Every day we have to make decisions. Most decisions are easy. You don't have to think too much about what clothes to put on in the morning. But, there are times when we are faced with difficult decisions.

It is often said that violence breeds violence.

**What do you believe the statement, "Violence breeds violence" means? Use the rest of this page to write what you think it means and give at least one example.**

It should not be surprising that many of those who commit violence were, themselves, victims of child abuse or neglect. Acceptance of violence as a way to solve problems only results in more hurt. Even though you were a victim of physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, abandonment, or any other life misfortunes, you do not have the right to harm others. It is difficult to break the cycle of violence but it is possible. Every time that violence is used to solve problems, another person has been hurt and is suffering. Long after the tears are gone, the emotional pain is still felt.

Human beings do three things:

- They feel
- They think
- They act

**Most violence is committed when someone jumps from feeling to acting without stopping to think first.**

Throughout this class, you will return to this concept time and time again as your instructor deems it appropriate. Following are terms you will become familiar with as you seek to resolve conflict through ways other than violence:

**Moral reasoning** will help you solve difficult problems by thinking through consequences of various behaviors before you act.

There are two parts to moral reasoning, the reversal test and the universal test. The goal is to think through the consequences of each test and then make a moral decision.

Here's how they work:

**The Reversal Test:** This test requires you to take the point of view of the person who will be affected by your actions. You ask yourself, "How would I like it if this situation was reversed and I was standing in this other person's shoes?" You should not do something to another person that you would not want done to yourself.

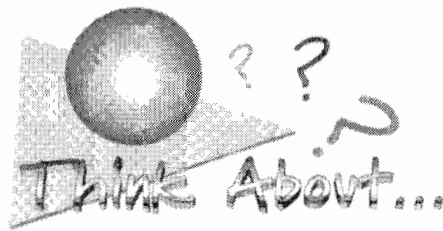
**The Universal Test:** If something is "universal", then it applies to everyone. For this test, ask yourself if you would want all persons to act in a certain way in a similar situation. Think about what would happen if everybody in the world was to do what you are thinking about doing. You should act towards others in the same way that you would want people to act all over the world. **Both of these tests derive from some basic questions. Answer them now.**

**What kind of world do you want to live in?**

**What kind of world do you want your family to live in?**

**What kind of world do you want your friends to live in?**





If you would not want yourself (or the people you care about) to be victimized by theft, sexual assault or murder (the reversal test), and you don't want people in general to go around stealing, raping, and murdering (the universal test), then your actions should reflect this.

Your actions do play a part in what kind of world this is. One person can cause a lot of misery. One person can also make this a better world in which to live.

Following are some problems. Use either the Reversal Test or the Universal Test or both to come up with a solution. Jot down your ideas and be prepared to discuss how you used moral reasoning in arriving at your solution.

You are walking to the 7-Eleven down the street one evening when a man in the parking lot calls you over to his van. He tells you that he's got to leave the area and he needs to sell some things. He opens up the back door and he shows you four televisions, three VCRs, and five car stereos. You don't have a VCR but you have been saving your money for one that a local electronics store carries. You figure that you will have enough money to buy it in three months. The man in the van tells you he will sell you a VCR for \$75 today. What will you do and why?

Using moral reasoning is the first step in solving problems without violence. It gets more complicated, however, when you are feeling conflict or anger with someone. Again, however, the solution is found in **thinking before you act. Think of a person you are angry with and answer the following questions:**

1. **What is the conflict about?**
2. **How does it affect me? (Can I just let it go, or is it bothering me so much that I must do something about it?)**

3. Why is solving this important to me?
4. What are my beliefs about the other person's role in the conflict?
5. What are some non-violent things I could do to solve the problem?
6. What are some non-violent things the other person could do to solve the problem?



7. Now that you have some possible alternative behaviors in mind, think about setting the tone for your confrontation. What positive thing could you say to set the tone and disarm the other person emotionally? (Example, "I don't want this to further damage our relationship and I want to be sure I understand this.")
8. Is there something positive you can say about the other person? (Example, "I appreciate your willingness to talk with me...I imagine you're as uncomfortable with the way things have been as I am.")
9. How would you ask the other person to define the problem as he or she sees it? Can you listen attentively without interrupting?

10. How will you describe the problem as you see it?
11. You have already noted some non-violent things you might be able to do to solve the problem.  
Can you guess some non-violent solutions the other person might have?
12. Are you willing to approach the person with this strategy? If so, you will probably be able to list possible solutions, brainstorm the advantages and disadvantages of them, and agree on something you both can live with. Neither of you will likely be perfectly happy with the solution. But you can both be partially happy and avoid violent conflict. If you would like for your instructor or group leader to assist you with this meeting, he or she will probably be willing to do so. This task is called "mediating." Sometimes a mediator likes to meet with both people by themselves first, before bringing the two together.

## Time-Out

The greatest challenge in stopping violent behavior is thinking straight when you are beginning to get angry in the midst of conflict. In fact, it is very difficult to think well when one is being overcome by anger or rage. Therefore, the most reasonable solution is Time-Out. Here's how it works.

### What is Time-Out?

Time-Out is a brief separation from the person with whom the conflict is being experienced.

### When do I use Time-Out?

When you or the person with whom you are in conflict seems to be more controlled by feelings than by rational thought -- which means it could soon escalate to violent language or behavior.

### How do I do it?

- Say, "This is beginning to upset me and I don't want to say or do something I will regret. I'd like to stop right now and get back together in one hour."
- Leave for exactly one hour. Try to relax and perhaps do something physical while you are alone such as running or swimming. Do not use alcohol or other drugs during the hour and do not get behind the wheel of a vehicle.

- Use the steps in the previous exercise to better understand yourself and the other person.  
Try to arrive at some non-violent alternatives. (Moral reasoning: Reversal test and/or Universal test)
- If you are not ready at the end of the hour, phone the person and reschedule.

What do I do when we get together again?

- Tell the person what you thought about during your time-out and ask if he or she is willing to talk about some solutions.
- If so, begin by asking how the time-out was for the other person and if he or she has any solutions to consider. Listen attentively and then share your ideas.
- If the anger escalates again, explain that it is too difficult to deal with now and put it off again. In the meantime, try to discuss the problem with a support person or counselor who may be willing to meet with the two of you to try again.

**Answer the following questions and be prepared to discuss them in class or group.**

1. List situations where you think Time-Out would not work.

2. List situations where you think Time-Out would work.
3. List some things you will have to overcome in order to use Time-Out.
4. What are some of the most common disputes you experience? Beside each one, list how they are usually resolved. Then go back and place T-O beside those you think could be better solved by using Time-Out's.

Time-Outs do work. But they take practice. Following are new beliefs you can be working on to help you use Time Out. Perhaps you will want to make a copy of this page and place it where you can read it every day.

1. I can react and express my concerns in ways other than violence.
2. I can choose how I want to change.
3. I can ask for help when I need it and offer help when others need it.
4. I can tell people when I cannot do what they expect of me.
5. I can ask for what I want, but I know I will not always get it.
6. I can control what I choose to think and how I choose to act.
7. I can reject the way others expect me to be.
8. I can express my fears, worries and disappointments in a positive way.
9. I can take responsibility for my own actions.
10. I can choose not to hit someone and thereby prove that I am emotionally strong.

## REMEMBER

- Violence is an epidemic in America.
- The mental health consequences of violence are substantial for individuals, families, communities, and for our nation as a whole.
- The economic cost of violence is enormous.
- Violence and fear of crime are problems for all people in our country.

Mark an "X" below to indicate which of the following is most likely to help you stop your own violent behavior.

- \_\_\_\_\_ More time in confinement facilities
- \_\_\_\_\_ Better understanding what it is like to be a victim of crime
- \_\_\_\_\_ Paying the costs to my victim (medical care, funeral expenses, counseling expenses, replacing stolen property, etc.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Getting a better education so I can get a good job
- \_\_\_\_\_ Counseling or medications or both (I can't do it on my own)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Moving to another neighborhood when I get out
- \_\_\_\_\_ Learning and practicing ways to solve problems without violent language or behavior.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Nothing. I can't stop being violent.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Nothing. I don't want to stop being violent.

Explain your choice:

