

Experts say it's never too early to teach compassion and empathy to children



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(BPT) - The news is filled with articles about the opinions and attitudes of the millennial generation and now, Generation Z. But what about the youngest generation — youths 4-9 years old? These children are growing up in a time of unprecedented access to information, when civility, kindness and compassion have taken a back seat to bullying and violence. Experts say it is more important now than ever for parents to seek learning moments in which children can experience compassion and empathy.

The Jensen Project is a program designed to foster compassion, inspiration and courage in young people as a path to avoiding the bullying and sexual harassment prevalent on college campuses. The program examines the attitudes and opinions of young people with the goal of inspiring a gentler, kinder, more empathetic dimension in their lives.

Janet Jensen, founder of The Jensen Project, says, “Children are at their most vulnerable when they are forming their social skills. They are a reflection of what they see and hear around them. Parents, educators and media influencers need to take extra care to teach compassion and courage at an early age.”

Recent research conducted by YouthBeat and commissioned by The Jensen Project, asked youths ages 4-9 if they thought the world would be a better place when they grow up. Forty-one percent said yes, while 38 percent felt the world would be the same or worse.

In an alarming statement about what stresses them the most, death and bullying each rose to the top third of concerns after family and school issues.

Experts agree bullying is becoming a critical issue at a younger age and must be addressed proactively if future generations will be able to reduce the incidents of harassment and sexual abuse in colleges and beyond.

Jensen offers the following recommendations for parents to raise children with compassion:

- * Children learn by example, so let them join you in volunteer projects or encourage them to get involved in age-appropriate volunteering.
- * Actively engage them in conversation about behavior that is troubling to you, whether it be playground taunting or headlines in the news. Ask them why that behavior is hurtful.
- * Inspire children to select friends of all races, creeds and economic status — not just friends who look like them. Exposure to cross-cultural families and friends teaches tolerance and understanding.
- * It's been said before, but is worth emphasizing, that monitoring a child's exposure to video games, live streaming and television time is one way to reduce exposure to bullying and violent behavior in entertainment.

Newscasts are filled with broadcasts of murders, robberies, fires, war, and political corruption. Small children are taking this in and processing it, along with their visions of superheroes. Today's youth are the long-term future of

our country, Jensen says. Watching how the world influences their thinking at a young age is truly an investment in the future of the country.

“Adults must become agents for positive daily behaviors that can lead to long-term change,” Jensen says. “The Jensen Project is committed to providing the inspirational resources to help make this happen.”

For more information about The Jensen Project, go to www.thejensenproject.com.

Supplemental Information

Image Caption(s)

Caption 1

Children should learn empathy and compassion at an early age according to The Jensen Project.

(Captions appear only on BrandpointContent.com.)