

WHY DO KIDS JOIN GANGS?

<http://gangsta411.com>

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Sociologists as well as actual gang members have identified the following reasons for joining a gang:

- identity
- discipline
- recognition
- love
- belonging
- money

In addition, many kids are intimidated into gangs to avoid continued harassment.

Gang members provide their members and family members with protection from other gangs as well as other perceived threats. Feelings of fear, hatred, bigotry, poverty and a general break down of social values are also considered motivations for joining a group.

Gangs are serious organizations that should be avoided at all costs. It may seem tempting to "belong" to a group and have a set bunch of friends. But keep in mind that groups that may have started out as a band of delinquent neighbourhood toughs have now turned into a violent drug gang, some of whom belong to the gang for enforcement, collection or other reasons. Joining a group known to have a reputation good or bad, gives a kid looking for a purpose; something to belong to. Participants have said that the mere interaction of members, listening to each others problems and sharing the other trials and tribulations of today's teens are faced with are the drawing card for them to become a "banger". Gang members claim to enjoy the respect or fear others exhibit around them. Then they say the money starts flowing & with that comes all the things associated with material wealth that is usually out of the reach of adolescents without the criminal of being involved in a gang.

Once a kid gets into a gang, over and over they are told there is no way out. They fear serious reprisals from fellow gang members if defection is suspected. Some are told they will be killed if they try to get out. The best advise is to stay away from gang activities no matter what.

HOW TO HELP YOUR KID

- Take action early: *The longer a kid is in a gang the harder it is to stop.*
- Talk with your son/daughter: *And try to really listen*
- Let him/her know you care: *Give him/her a hug sometimes. Praise the things he/she does right*
- Take a firm stand against illegal activity: *A little stealing or dealing will put him in a situation where he could be killed. Never accept money or gifts that may have been obtained illegally.*
- Provide a good example
- Try to get into family counselling: *While the problem may not be yours it can best be worked on as a family*
- If you or your spouse have a problem with drugs, alcohol or anger get help: *If your child chooses a gang because of trouble at home, his/her life will be at risk!*
- Encourage him to become active in a church group
- If your child is honestly trying to make a change, consider moving to a new neighbourhood. *He can't wait for a bus to go to work or school in a place he has lots of enemies. Ask him what neighbourhood would be safe.*
- If you are not able to move, maybe a relative could let him stay with them.

WHY GANGS ARE VIOLENT

- Young people engaged in illegal activity often carry weapons
- Violence takes place in retaliation for real or perceived wrongs done to another gang
- Retaliation may target ANY member of a gang, not necessarily the offending member
- Once a climate of war exists between two gangs, violence may be continual