

Aggression and Disruptive Behavior

We all know that violence has increased dramatically. Efforts at gun control, more prisons and severe punishments – all have failed to reduce our standing as the most violence-prone of all industrialized nations.¹

Experts have been calling for research on the causes, and the National Research Council recommends identifying genetic and biological factors of “violence-prone” children.² However, genetic factors do not change in one generation, and cannot explain the whole story. It is time to begin paying attention to research being done in another direction. As long ago as the 1980’s, studies in both schools and jails dramatically showed that a diet that removes additives and enhances nutrition brings significant improvement in behavior and academic performance.

In 1985 Dr. Stephen Schoenthaler published a series of studies on 12 juvenile correctional facilities, housing 8,076 young offenders.³ Just as he showed in the school studies (*page 11*), not *all* the children improved, but 20% of them made such a dramatic recovery that the total of “deviant behaviors” for all the children fell by 47%.

We may not be able to provide every child with two loving parents, but we really can improve nutrition, reduce toxins, and even test for metabolic abnormalities through our schools and medical services.

At a Tidewater, VA detention facility, behavior problems fell 48% following dietary changes: Violence declined 33%, theft dropped 77%, etc.⁴

A controlled study of 1,382 youths at three Los Angeles County probation detention centers found a 44% reduction in bad behavior,⁵ and a northern California probation department facility making similar dietary changes⁶ found that violence fell 25% and “horseplay” declined 42%. In both these California institutions, suicide attempts fell 44%.

Animal studies⁷ on the petroleum-based antioxidant preservative BHA, BHT, and TBHQ have long shown them to cause decreased learning and grooming, and increased activity, developmental delays and aggression. Other studies⁸ have shown these preservatives to be carcinogenic as well.

Isn't it time to simply replace these three preservatives with others equally available but less harmful? Instead, in efforts to reduce trans fats, we have greatly *increased* the use of these chemicals in food oil. We will all have to pay the piper in the form of increased cancers, increased violence, increased school problems, and decreased academic performance.

Again, studies⁹ have shown that violence-prone males have abnormal copper-to-zinc ratios, and that 75% of young criminals have allergy and nutritional problems. In 1997 and 1998, Bennett showed that when treated appropriately by diet and nutritional intervention, most young offenders improve and never re-offend. Even earlier, a chemist in the UK had found that children with ADHD lost zinc through their urine when exposed to Yellow #5 and #6, resulting in a variety of symptoms, including aggression and violence.¹⁰

Monkeys fed soy formula¹¹ (which has much more manganese than breast milk) develop neurological and behavior problems. Some violent adolescents have been found to have high levels of manganese in their hair.

In 1989, the Kellogg Report¹² said, “Nutrition, lifestyle choices and the state of our environment hold solutions to many of the crises which beset society.” They go on to say, “Many who readily accept the link between diet and heart disease or other chronic physical conditions, find it hard to imagine that nutrition could have a direct and determining effect on human behavior and personality dysfunctions.”

A more recent review of the literature on violence discusses cholesterol and hormone levels, nutritional deficits, prenatal/postnatal exposure to metals, smoking and other toxins, iron, zinc, neurotoxins, brain injury, and the family environment.¹³

Organizations and families dealing with violent children (and adults) must begin to consider the role of foods, additives, heavy metal exposure, essential fatty acid levels, vitamins, and other dietary factors.

1. **N.Y. Times**, Nov. 13, 1992, “Study Cites Role of Biological and Genetic Factors in Violence”

2. *Ibid.*

3. **Schoenthaler** 1985

4. **Schoenthaler** 1983, 1983a

5. **Schoenthaler** 1986, 1991; See the experience of several schools at www.school-lunch.org

6. **Schoenthaler** 1983b

7. **Meyer** 1980; **Stokes** 1974; **Tanaka** 1993; **Zoccarato** 1987

8. **Bauer** 2001, 2005; **Kahl** 1984, 1993; **NIH** 11th Report on Carcinogens 1005; **Sarafian** 2002; **Sasaki** 2002; **Thompson** 1988, 1989

9. **Walsh** 1997; **Bennett** 1997, 1998

10. **Ward** 1990, 1997

11. **Cockell** 2004; **Golub** 2005

12. **The Kellogg Report** 1989

13. **Liu** 2005