

Preface

Aggression among young people is an important social issue. Young people who behave aggressively may harm not only themselves, but others. Moreover, children with serious aggression problems are more likely than children without such problems to become teenagers who have problems with aggression, with other mental health issues, or with substance use; and as adults they are more likely to engage in acts of violence. Fortunately, there is mounting evidence that early intervention and treatment for children who show signs of aggression can significantly reduce these harmful outcomes.

Many thousands of Canadians work or volunteer in a variety of settings with children and youth who have problems with anger and aggression. Teachers and school administrators, day-care and recreation centre workers, youth shelter workers, social service workers, sports coaches, youth leaders, camp counsellors and camp directors—all must be prepared to handle difficult behaviour at a moment's notice while ensuring the safety of all concerned. Their efforts, while fraught with challenges, are critical in addressing the emotional and behavioural problems that often impede the educational and social goals of young people.

Our understanding of the many contributing causes of aggression in children and youth has grown immensely over the past decade, and there are many evidence-based approaches available today to help those involved with young people who are showing problems. The information in this book is drawn from the research and experience of child psychologists, child psychiatrists, special education teachers, and mental health and substance use counsellors. The chapters are organized in a manner that presents and builds on developmental knowledge, then applies this knowledge to an understanding of and response to aggressive behaviour. We hope you find the material both inspiring and pertinent to your important work with children and youth.

David A. Wolfe, Editor