



## TIP OF THE WEEK

### Gangs

It is normal to want to feel accepted by your peers and belonging to a group that shares common interests or a bond is one way to do this. Some of the groups that you may belong to include:

- sports teams
- religious groups
- school clubs
- community groups

Gangs can also provide this feeling of social acceptance, but they're different in one important way: gangs are involved in criminal activity.

There are many reasons why an individual might want to belong to a gang. Benefits of gang membership can include:

- acceptance by your peers
- protection if you live in a rough neighborhood
- protection if you are a member of an ethnic group that is commonly discriminated against
- a feeling of belonging or community – many gangs identify their membership by wearing specific styles or colors of clothing, use ritualistic hand signals or gestures or display a specific tattoo

But, like anything else, there are also very real risks and consequences. Gang membership can be dangerous for you and others. Gang members may:

- take part in crimes like dealing drugs, stealing cars or carrying weapons
- discriminate against certain groups of people
- resolve problems or disputes with aggression or violence
- abuse drugs and/or alcohol
- be involved in risky or illegal sexual activities

These activities could result in arrest, imprisonment, personal harm, even death.

You may be more likely to become involved in a gang if:

- your friends and/or family members belong to a gang
- there are gangs in your neighborhood
- you are having problems at home or with peers
- a particular gang is using threats or intimidation to pressure you to join
- you feel bad about yourself and see gangs as a way to feel accepted
- you like the excitement and risk of gang activities
- you want to feel important and powerful
- you feel vulnerable and think a gang can offer you protection

The time to consider the risks and benefits of gang membership is before you join. It is considerably more difficult to get out once you have been a member and have information about their criminal activities.

- Hang out with people who are not in gangs
- Try to settle arguments with words instead of fighting or using a weapon
- Get involved in a variety of activities like sports, part-time work or volunteering
- Ask for the support of a trusted friend or adult
- Contact your local police department - they have special units that deal strictly with youth crime and/or gangs and they can help you stay out and/or get out of a gang.



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If you have information a crime, contact Protective Services at 780-471-7477. If you wish to remain anonymous, contact Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477). Your identity will remain anonymous, and if the information you provide leads to a conviction, you could eligible for a reward of up to \$2000.00.

***Everybody benefits, except the criminal.***