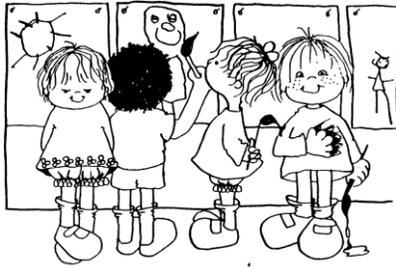


Child Safety Tips Preventing Crimes Against Children.



The most important key to child safety is effective communication with your child. Equip your children with the tools that they need to be safe.

Children who are not listened to or who do not have their needs met in the home are more vulnerable to abduction or exploitation.

The first step families need to take is to establish an atmosphere in their home where their children feel comfortable sharing and discussing sensitive matters and experiences that have made them feel hurt, scared, uncomfortable or confused. The simple truth is that children are often too afraid or too confused to report their experiences and their fears.



Take time to listen to your children.

It is important that you establish a relationship with your children where they feel comfortable talking freely about their likes and dislikes, their friends and their true feelings.

Tricks of the exploiter.

Often times exploiters or abductors will initiate a seemingly innocent and subtle contact with the victim. They may try to get to know and befriend the children. They manipulate children's nature to trust and desire to be helpful.

Behavior and actions, not people.

"Stay away from strangers" is a popular warning given to children to prevent abduction or exploitation. The term STRANGER however, is difficult for children to understand. Is the familiar person at the checkout counter a stranger, the family barber, the guest speaker at school, the friendly person who struck up a conversation with mom or dad or the well dressed person in the park who the child has never seen before?

- **A STRANGER IS SOMEONE WHO YOUR CHILD DOES NOT KNOW WELL.**

Identifying "dangerous" **SITUATIONS** and/or **BEHAVIORS** is easier for children to understand than is identifying "dangerous" people. Remember that most children who are abducted or exploited have some type of familiarity with their

perpetrator. Children need to be able to identify what is unacceptable behavior no matter who poses it.

Use "everyday" experiences as teachable moments.

The rising awareness of crimes against children has created a sense of fear in many families. Because fear is often paralyzing in dangerous situations, you must equip your children with skills and tools to help them be safe.

Be calm, clear and reasonable when you talk to your child. Avoid using frightening details of what might happen to them if they do not follow the safety rules.

Use "everyday" types of experiences as teachable moments by playing the "what if game." "What if the person in the park wanted you to help them find their puppy?" "What if the next door neighbor told you I sent him to pick you up from school?" "What if a car pulls over to "ask for directions?"

Reinforce with your children that they should be suspicious when a teenager or an adult asks them for a "quick" favor or for help.

Establish that it is okay for a child to say NO to an adult. Politeness and friendliness do not apply to all situations. Children should have their parent's permission before they help out or go somewhere with anyone.

Good secrets and bad secrets.

A good secret is one that will ultimately be told or be discovered. It might be the special present that someone will receive, a surprise party that is coming up, etc. Good secrets make people feel good.

A bad secret is one in which someone says "you can never tell anyone about this" or "this is our special secret, promise me that you won't tell your parents." There often is an implied or direct threat included with a bad secret. Teach your children the difference between good and bad secrets and tell them that they should always tell a bad secret right away to someone that they trust.

Yell NO, Run and Tell.

In a situation where your child is uncomfortable, confused or scared, teach them to: **YELL "NO!" RUN away from the situation. TELL an adult.**

What can you do to prevent child abduction and exploitation?

- Know where your children are at all times. Be familiar with their friends and daily activities.
- If your children are to play, ride bike, etc. away from your home they must be with a buddy.
- Establish a family password that you will use only in emergency situations.
- Be sensitive to changes in your children's behavior. These changes are signals that you need to tune into what is different in their life.

- Be alert to a teenager or adult who is paying an unusual amount of attention to your children or giving them inappropriate or expensive gifts. Return these gifts for your child to set what is an acceptable boundary.
- Teach your children to trust their own feelings and assure them that they have the right to say NO to what they sense is wrong.
- Listen carefully to your children's fears, and be supportive in all your discussions with them.
- Teach your children that no one should approach them or touch them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable. If someone does, they should tell their parents immediately. Yell, Run, Tell.
- Carefully select baby-sitters or any other individuals who will have custody of your children. Research day care facilities by securing references, consulting police records, the Better Business Bureau, the State Licensing Department and Fire Code compliance data.
- For in home child care you may request each family member over the age of 18 provide a release to have a criminal background check run. You may also contact the local police department to determine what, if any, calls for police service have been made to this home and neighborhood.

Basic rules for child safety.

As soon as your children can articulate a sentence, they can begin learning how to be safe. Prepare your children with these tips.

- If you are in a public place, and you get separated from your parents, don't wander around looking for them. Go to a checkout counter and quickly tell the person in charge that you have lost your mom and dad and need help in finding them.
- You should not get into a car or go anywhere with any person unless your parents have told you that it is okay.
- If someone follows you on foot or in a car, stay away from him or her. If someone in the car speaks to you, DON'T GO NEAR THE CAR!
- Grownups and other older people who need help should not be asking children for help; they should be asking older people.
- No one should be asking you for directions or to look for a "lost puppy" or telling you that your mother or father is in trouble, and that he or she will take you to them.
- If someone tries to take you somewhere, quickly get away from them and yell or scream. "This man is trying to take me away" or "this person is not my mother."
- You should try to use the "buddy system" and never go places alone.
- Always ask your parents permission to leave the yard or play area or go into someone's home.
- Never hitchhike or try to get a ride with anyone unless your parents have told you it is okay to ride with him or her.
- No one should ask you to keep a special secret. If he or she does, you should tell their parents or teachers.
- If someone wants to take your picture, tell your parents or teacher.
- No one should touch you in the parts of the body covered by the bathing suit, nor should you touch anyone else in those areas. Your body is special and private.
- You can be assertive, and you have the right to say NO to someone who tries to take you somewhere, touches you, or makes you feel uncomfortable in any way.

Detecting sexual exploitation.

Children have the right to not be touched in any ways that make them feel hurt, confused, uncomfortable or scared. The parts of their body covered by their bathing suite are private parts. Children should not be asked to touch anyone in or allow anyone to touch them in those areas.

Sexual exploitation should not be confused with physical contacts that are true expressions of affection. A warm and healthy relationship can exist if adults respect the child and place reasonable limits on their physical interaction.

Child molestation is often a repeat crime, where victims are victimized a number of times over a period of time. The reality of sexual exploitation is that often the child is very confused, uncomfortable and unwilling to talk about the experience to parents, teachers or anyone else. But your child will give off signals that something is not right and they will talk if you have established an atmosphere of trust and support in your home, where they can talk without fear of accusation, blame or guilt.

Be alert to the indicators of sexual abuse:

- Changes in behavior, extreme mood swings, withdrawal, fearfulness and excessive crying.
- Bed-wetting, nightmares, fear of going to bed, or other sleep disturbances.
- Acting out inappropriate sexual activity or showing an unusual interest in sexual matters. A sudden acting out of feelings or aggressive or rebellious behavior.
- Regression to infantile behavior.
- A fear of certain places, people or activities, especially being alone with certain people. Children should not be forced to give affection to an adult or teenager if they do not want to. A desire to avoid this may indicate a problem.
- Pain, itching, bleeding, fluid or rawness in the private areas.

Child protection is everyone's responsibility.

Children cannot look out for themselves. It is our responsibility to look out for them. Every home and school should establish a program that effectively teaches children about safety and protection measures.

As a parent, take an active interest in your children and listen to them. Teach them that they can be assertive in order to protect themselves against abduction and exploitation. Most importantly make your home a place that fosters trust and support. When your child's emotional and safety needs are fulfilled, he or she will not seek love and support from someone else.



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