

PERSONAL SAFETY



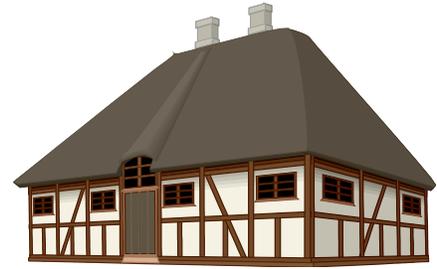
Being personally safe is a lifestyle choice

Preparing only for the “stranger” confrontation or a random act of crime will not ensure your safety. Your overall safety depends on reducing the opportunity for a criminal to be successful. This is done by how you live your life and the choices that you make throughout each and every day.

- *Fact: Nationwide, in seven out of ten acts of violence, the victim know their attacker as a friend, significant other, spouse, co-worker, or casual acquaintance.*
50% of all sexual assaults occur in the home.
- *Fact: In over 60% of Plymouth’s residential burglaries, the criminal gained access to the home through an unlocked door or window.*
- *Fact: One out of every three crimes happen to someone between the age of 12 and 24.*

General Personal Safety Options

Incidents of violence can occur anywhere at anytime. **Trust your gut feeling that something may be wrong.** Following are some guidelines that may help reduce potential vulnerability. Remember though, whether you choose to use the options or not, no one has the right to harm you.

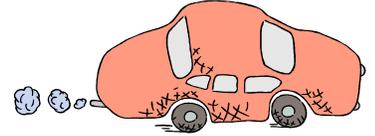


AT HOME

- Be aware of your surroundings. Be familiar with who is coming and going—who belongs and who doesn't. Immediately report suspicious or criminal activity by calling 9-1-1.
- Know you can call 9-1-1 free from any pay phone and that 9-1-1 can be dialed from your landline, even if you do not have phone service.
- Try to stay on the line with the dispatcher and give them as much information as you have. If you cannot stay on the line, police will be dispatched to the location the call was made from. Calls from cell phones may not be able to be located.
- Change your locks when you move into a new residence. Make sure your doors have deadbolt locks and peepholes. Use them!
- Don't hide spare keys outside. They are found too easily.
- Women may be safer using only first initials and last names on mailboxes and in phone directories. Keep personal information on checks to a minimum.
- Do not mail bills from your home mailbox. Drop mail in official US Postal mailboxes.
- Check IDs when repair people, meter readers, etc. come to your door. Do NOT hesitate to call and check them out or refuse them admittance if something feels wrong.
- If you let someone in and have second thoughts, be assertive. Tell them to leave or leave yourself. Pretend you are not alone by mentioning a friend or family member is asleep in the next room.
- Make sure entrances, garages, grounds, and hallways are well-lit.
- Install lights with motion detectors, timers, or photoelectric cells so front lights are on after dark. Have timers on lights, TVs, and radios to create a sense of occupancy when you are gone.
- Instruct children or baby-sitters not to give out information about who is home, who is out, or for how long.
- Do not leave notes on your door for others or allow solicitor's material to remain on your doorknob since they advertise your absence.
- If you will be gone on vacation, have a trusted person collect mail, newspapers, and keep up with yard work.
- If you suspect your home has been broken into, don't go in or call out. Go someplace else and call 9-1-1.
- Always lock your doors. Keep doors locked even if you are home or outside doing yard work. Keep your overhead garage door closed. If you have a portable phone, take it outside with you.
- Be careful when using computer internet or on-line services. Use caution in providing personal information. Being flooded with e-mail can be annoying; having a chat room participant show up at your door uninvited can be terrifying.
- Do not give out personal or financial information to unsolicited emails or unsolicited phone calls. Contact the company directly with numbers you have at home in your files.
- Mark your personal belongings with an Operation ID number, available from the Plymouth Police Department.
- Organize or be an active member in a Neighborhood Crime Watch. Look out for one another.

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IN YOUR CAR



- Keep car doors locked at all times, and windows rolled up all the way.
- Keep valuables out of your car and avoid obvious signs of gender. Keep your purse out of sight when driving.
- If you have trouble, raise the hood and stay in your vehicle. If someone offers assistance, roll the window down just enough to talk to them. Ask them to stop at the first phone and call the police for you.
- Do not stop to help a stranger in a stalled vehicle. Instead, go to a safe place and report the stalled vehicle to the police.
- Do not pick up hitchhikers.
- If someone tries to break into your car while you are in it, honk the horn in short, repeated blasts and try to drive away.
- If you are being followed, don't go home. Drive to the nearest police, fire station or 24-hour gas station—anyplace with people around. Remember, the Plymouth Police Department is not staffed with office personnel after hours.
- Try to keep your car maintained and keep your gas tank at least half full.
- Park in well-lit, public areas and consider the time of day that you park and when the sun will set.
- If security staff is available to walk you to your car, don't be embarrassed to use them.
- Check inside your car before getting in.
- If you leave keys with the parking attendant or at a service station, leave only the car key (not a house key).
- Do not overload your arms with packages and check around your car before getting into it.
- Always have your keys ready to unlock the car door and enter without delay. You will appear vulnerable if you are looking for your keys as you approach your car. Lock the car door immediately after entering the vehicle.

ON THE STREET



- Stay on populated, well-lit streets. Avoid shrubbery, dark areas near buildings and other places. When possible, exercise with a partner—even during the day.
- Look around you as you walk and be aware of your surroundings. Make it difficult for anyone to take you by surprise. Walk confidently at a steady pace.
- Let someone know where you will be or the route you will be taking.
- Avoid secluded or deserted areas and businesses (phone booths, Laundromats, etc.).
- If using public transportation, sit near the driver.
- If you have gotten a ride in a cab or from a friend, ask the driver to wait and watch until you are safely inside your destination.
- Be cautious about revealing cash or credit cards. Limit the amount of cash you carry and NEVER carry your social security card in your wallet.
- Be willing to give up your purse or wallet. If confronted, toss the purse or wallet away from you, giving you a chance to escape.
- Try to limit the number of items you carry.
- If you carry a handbag, hold it close to your body with the fastener closed and turned toward your body. “Fanny-packs” keep your personal items close to you while keeping your hands free.
- Do not wear headphones. They block your ability to hear someone approach you.
- Again, trust your instincts. Do not hesitate to remove yourself from a situation. Forget the rules of etiquette and social norms. Be willing to make a scene, if necessary. Most rapes are not committed by strangers, but by men who know their victims. Your safety may depend on a quick and decisive response.

BE OBSERVANT AND AWARE OF YOUR SURROUNDINGS AT ALL TIMES!

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PERSONAL SAFETY FOR CHILDREN – FAMILY RULES



Family Rules

Establishing a system of “family rules” about personal safety can be a good way to teach children to distinguish between safe and non-safe situations. Many families already have rules about bedtime, TV watching, chores, etc. By adopting rules about personal safety, parents can teach good habits through reinforcement and repetition without generating excessive fear. The following are suggestions for personal safety rules that can be incorporated into the family routine.

Inside Rules

- Kids should know their complete home address, telephone number including area code, and parents’ first and last names.
- If kids are home alone for a few hours after school, teach kids to check the house before entering. If anything looks wrong (open door, broken window, etc.), do not go in the house. Go to a trusted neighbor and call police (9-1-1).
- Teach kids to call parents when they get home.
- If kids are old enough to use the phone, they should know how and when to call police (9-1-1).
- Kids should be taught never to reveal any personal information (their name, school, age, etc.) over the phone or on the internet.
- If kids are home alone and answer a phone call for the absent parent, they should say “she can’t come to the phone right now,” and take a message or tell the caller to try later—don’t make excuses; they sound phony.
- Kids are old enough to answer the door when they are old enough to check the identity of the person at the door WITHOUT opening it.
- Kids should help their parents make sure doors that should be locked are locked.

Outside Rules

- Establish a system of accountability. Learn the full names of your kids’ friends, their parents’ names, addresses, and phone numbers. Check to verify the accuracy if you get the information from your kids. When your child is at a friend’s home, who else is present? Parents? Older kids? Other neighbors? No one?
- Know your child’s routes to and from school, play, and errands.
- Kids should be taught never to go anywhere with anyone without parental permission. This includes getting permission a second time if plans change and calling to check before going from one friend’s home to another location.

- Kids should never play in isolated area or playgrounds, and should avoid public restrooms, building sites, and dark or lonely streets.
- Teach kids alternatives; if they are bothered or followed on the playground, walking to a friend's home, school, or store, where do they go? Walk these common routes with your child and look for choices. Can they go back into the school, in a store or business (kids may be reluctant to enter a strange store or business unless you give them permission), into a fire station, or approach someone doing yard work?
- Children should know that a McGruff truck is a safe place to ask for help and wait for police assistance.
- Knocking on the door of a stranger is a last resort. If they have no other choice, they should look for a house with a light on (at night) or toys in the yard, if possible, and ask the homeowner to "Please call the police, someone is bothering me," but not to go inside the house.
- Kids' best defense is their voices and their legs. Teach them to yell "No" and run away from someone who is bothering them. Attract as much attention as possible.
- Teach kids not to approach cars that stop to ask for help. Most legitimate adults would not ask a young child for directions anyway. If the car follows them or the driver gets out, they should run away and yell.

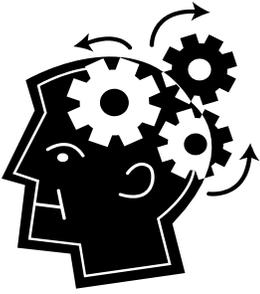
Bad guy Rules



- Teach kids that "bad guys" can be anyone. Society teaches kids bad guys are always ugly, mean and scary. Bad guys are almost always portrayed as strangers.
- Remember a stranger is someone who is not known by the child. A friend of the parents, a friend of the child's friend, or a neighbor can be a stranger. A stranger can be a good guy or a bad guy. Teach children the "No, go, and tell" Rule.

- Some bad guys act nice, are friendly, and are attractive. Some bad guys play tricks on kids. Typical bad guy's tricks include bribes (money, toys, games, or promises of those things), lies (your mother told me to pick you up at school), requests for help ("my puppy ran away, can you help me find him?"), or threats ("if you don't come with me, I'll hurt your mom").
- Teach kids that a bad guy is someone who asks them to violate family rules; e.g., someone who says the child doesn't need permission to accompany them.
- Develop a family "code word." If someone other than a parent is going to pick up a child at school, that person should repeat the "code word" first before the kid agrees to leave the safety of the school grounds. The code word should remain a secret and be changed should others learn of it.

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CHARACTERISTICS AND BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS OF A PEDOPHILE

When most people imagine a child molester, they picture some ugly, old man in a trench coat coaxing children to come to him in exchange for some candy. They don't picture Uncle Joe or Aunt Lorraine; the neighbor next door or the friendly parishioner; another family member or trusted co-worker. They don't think of mom or dad, or in the case of single parents, their significant other. This misconception has been effectively dispelled through information obtained in thousands of child sexual abuse investigation over the years. **Child molesters come from all walks of life and from all socioeconomic groups. They can be male or female, rich or poor, employed or unemployed, religious or non-religious or from any race.** Through numerous case studies, the Department of Justice has developed characteristics and behavior indicators of a pedophile. They are as follows:

1. Is most often an adult male.
2. Is usually married.
3. Works in a wide range of occupations, from unskilled laborer to corporate executive.
4. Relates better to children than adults.
5. Socializes with few adults unless they are pedophiles.
6. Usually prefers children in a specific age group.
7. Usually prefers either males or females, but may be bisexual.
8. May seek employment or volunteer programs involving children of the age of his preference.
9. Pursues children for sexual purposes.
10. Frequently photographs or collects photographs of his victims, either dressed, nude, or in sexually explicit acts.
11. Collects child erotica and child-adult pornography.
 - a. To lower the inhibitions of victims.
 - b. To fantasize when no potential victim is available.
 - c. To relive his sexual activities.
 - d. To justify his activities. (The depiction of others engaged in these acts legitimizes them in the pedophile's mind.)
 - e. To blackmail victims to keep them from telling.
12. May possess and furnish narcotics to his victims to lower their inhibitions.
13. Is usually intelligent enough to recognize that he has a personal problem and understand the severity of it.
14. May go to great lengths to conceal his illegal activity.
15. Often rationalizes his illicit activities, emphasizing his positive impact upon the victim and repressing feelings about the harm he has done.
16. Often portrays the child as the aggressor. This usually occurs after the child realizes that by withholding "sexual favors" the child will obtain what he or she desires, such as new toys, clothing or trips.
17. Talks about children in the same manner as one would talk about an adult lover or spouse.
18. Often was a child molestation victim and frequently seeks out children at the age or stage of physical development at which he was molested.
19. Often seeks out publications and organizations that support his sexual beliefs and practices.
20. Usually corresponds with other pedophiles and exchanges child pornography and erotica.
21. Is usually non-violent and has few problems with the law (pedophiles are frequently respected community members).

The **widespread misconception** that child molestation consists solely of children being seized from the street and forcibly molested couldn't be further from the truth. Although these incidents do occur, the vast majority of child molesters are adults who seduce children through subtle intimidation and persuasion and are known to the child.

The **incestuous or interfamilial** molester will use force or fear to molest children. As the term implies, the child does not know the molester. This type of molestation is usually reported promptly to the police because the trauma to the child is readily apparent.

The **single-parent family** is particularly vulnerable to the pedophile; the parent usually has a full-time job and is attempting to fulfill the role of both parents, as well as run the household. In many cases, the parent is unable to provide the psychological support the child needs. These situations may contribute to the success of the child molester who can and will provide the caring attention that, however superficial, may be lacking at home. Of course, domestic problems in intact families also make children vulnerable to the pedophile. It should be noted as well, many pedophiles seek out mothers of single-parent families for the purpose of victimizing their children.

The single most effective means of protecting your child is **communication** with your child. They have to feel comfortable discussing sensitive matter with you. If they don't feel they can talk with you about their true feelings or that they will be "put down" for it, then you can't expect they will tell you when they are put in an uncomfortable situation by a child molester.

Teach your children that they should not be asked to touch anyone in the bathing suit areas of their body or allow anyone to touch them in those areas. Teach them types of situations to avoid. It's not good enough to tell a child to avoid strangers. **Most child molestations are committed by someone known or related to the child.**



For a list of free child safety pamphlets, call the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children *toll free* at 1-800-843-5678.

Much of the material in this handout came from the law enforcement training manual entitled "Child Abuse and Exploitation". This manual is put out by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.



SAFETY TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS - TALKING WITH CHILDREN.

Every parent should know and follow the safety tips offered below. Please take the time to read and share this information with your children.

LISTEN TO YOUR CHILDREN

And believe what they are telling you.

TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

Know where your children are at all times. Be familiar with their friends and daily activities.

BUILD SELF-ESTEEM

A child who has low self-esteem cannot protect himself/herself. Listen carefully to your children's fears and be supportive in all your decisions with them, replacing fear with knowledge.

TEACH DECISION-MAKING

Children at all ages can make decisions. Practice early with little decisions so big decisions later are easier. Teach them to trust their own feelings, and assure them they have the right to say "NO" to what they sense is wrong.

BUILD SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Children need positive adult role models and need to know where they can go for help.

CHOOSE SUBSTITUTE CAREGIVERS CAREFULLY

Interview and monitor babysitters, group leaders, youth pastors, etc. 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.

PROTECT KIDS WHO ARE HOME ALONE

Set ground rules, emergency contacts, and responsibilities for latchkey kids.

TALK WITH YOUR CHILDREN

Teach 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.

BE SENSITIVE

Watch for changes in a child's behavior; they are signals that you should sit down and talk to your children about what caused the changes.

USE ROLE PLAYING

Rehearse safety situations with your child. Give them power through knowledge, Play the WHAT IF games.

LET KIDS BE KIDS

Teach them what they will need to know to be safe and let them know you will do your best to protect them. Don't scare the fun out of children.

This and other safety information is available to you and others from the following organizations. Please share these tips with your family and friends.

Jacob Wetterling Foundation: www.jwf.org or 1-800-325-Hope

National Crime Prevention Council: www.npc.org

National center for missing and exploited children: www.missingkids.com or 1-800-The Lost

Minnesota Department of Corrections: www.corr.state.mn.us

Plymouth Police Department: plymouthmn.org or 763-509-5160