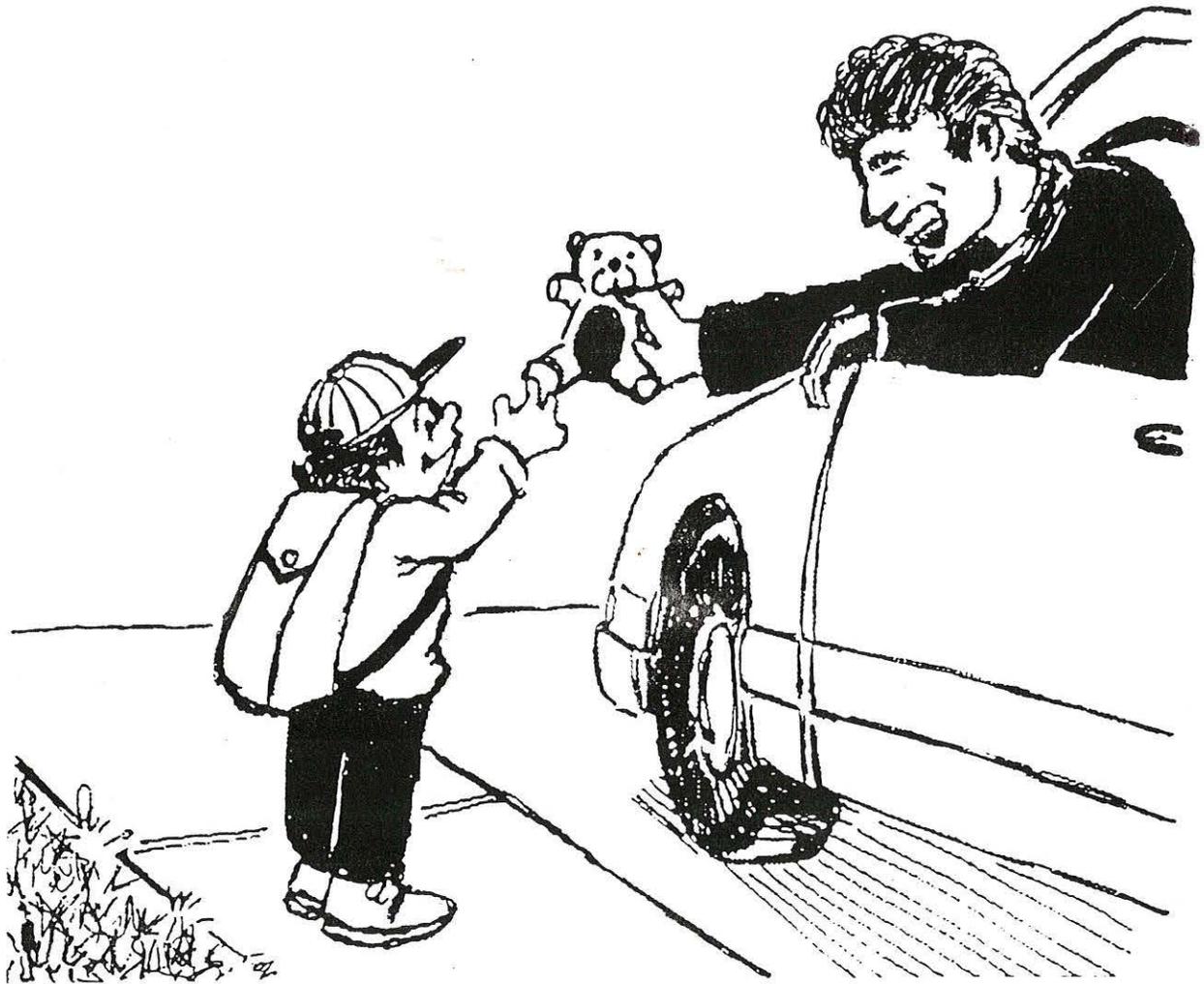


STREET SAFE KIDS

Protecting children from sexual predators – a street-proofing manual



“Street Safe Kids is one of the most comprehensive self-defense and street-proofing courses available. We strongly recommend that parents enroll their children in this ‘hands-on’ program.”

Mabyn Armstrong, director of prevention
The Missing Children’s Network Canada

George J. Manoli

*P*arental Abductions

The seriousness of parental abduction is tragically underestimated and is often not seen as a destructive process for the abducted child. People figure that as long as the child is with one parent, then all is well. Case studies show that in virtually every case, within a year of the abduction, psychological, emotional, physical and sexual mistreatment are the prices paid by the abducted child. Parents who kidnap their own children have been shown to be emotionally unstable with histories of violence and abuse.

"It has been estimated that one out of every ten divorces involves a child abduction.... Between 100,000 to 400,000 American children are victims of parental kidnapping by a non-custodial parent each year.... 20 to 30% of abducted children are never seen by the custodial parent again....The age of children who are victims of parental abduction varies greatly but generally does not exceed 12 years of age." (Safe and Sound, Franks and Erling, 1990 & Pamphlet #3, Parental Abduction, MCNC).

The parents' feelings towards each other when going through a divorce are often warlike and hostile. If one parent is feeling rejected, resentful, angry or bitter, taking their own child away is seen not as an act of love but as a way to get even and punish the other parent. In their pamphlets on parental abduction, The Missing Children's Network Canada (MCNC) indicate some of the reasons given by parents for resorting to abduction of their own children:

- ➔ Wanting to punish the spouse for the splitting up of the couple ;
- ➔ Refusal to accept a separation or a request for divorce ;
- ➔ Convinced that the clauses of the custody order and visitation rights are unjust and/or too inflexible ;
- ➔ Difficulty in adapting to the customs of a different country ;
- ➔ Desires to pursue the role of a sole parent.

"Parental abduction or the non-return of a child is rarely an impulsive act. It is generally meticulously planned to ensure success and to reduce the risk of being located (liquidation of assets, closure of accounts, passport application, etc.). Generally the abducting parent can count on the complicity of his family and friends for direct assistance or by their silence concerning police authorities and the searching parent. Several indicators of an eventual parental abduction may be identified :

Parental abduction

- ➔ The abduction may proceed or follow the legal separation or the divorce and especially within a short time before or after the granting of legal custody ;
- ➔ The abduction may take place during the exercise of visitation rights ;
- ➔ A parental abduction occurs frequently in families where there exists conjugal violence, tempestuous relations, and basic differences in points of view on the education and religion of the children ;
- ➔ Threats must always be taken seriously as well as the children's critical remarks or comments following a visit to the other parent." (MCNC)

Living life on the run is hell for an abducted child. They often live in hiding (moving often in unsanitary accommodations), they suffer malnutrition, negligence, lack of hygiene and cleanliness, are kept out of school, and are forced to continually lie about their name and family history. Establishing long-term friendships and meaningful relationships with other children is a rarity, which often creates a sense of insecurity and non-belonging for the child. They have trouble understanding why the other parent has not made any effort in locating them and suffer immensely due to the separation of the parent and family members from whom they were taken.

Due to being terrorized, intimidated, forced to obey and lied to by the abducting parent, the abducted child suffers psychological torture such as having a high degree of anxiety, fright, depression, difficulty with trust, fear of new people and low self-esteem (due to being repeatedly told that the other parent (a) has abandoned them and no longer loves them; (b) wants to start a new life without either of them; (c) has done something wrong and is in prison; (d) had an accident and died; (e) knows where they are but doesn't care enough to call them, etc.).

The Missing Children's Network Canada have put together four pamphlets on the subject of parental abduction. The following was taken with permission from MCNC. I would strongly encourage you to contact MCNC if you need assistance or advice regarding parental abduction :

1. ***Education is the key*** : Knowledge on the subject will empower both the parent and the concerned child(ren).
2. ***Have a family plan in case of abduction or separation***. Plan ahead. Gently prepare your child for the possibility of them being taken by their non-custodial parent.

3. ***Work through custody issues first, then the property settlement.***
4. ***“Include special provisions in the custody decree*** such as specifying the beginning and end dates of visits, requiring legal approval to take the child out of state, and requiring written consent to take the child from school.” (Not My Child, J. Wagner, 1994).

Indicate in the custody order the restriction of the removal of the child from the province or country without prior written consent from the custodial parent...Suggest to the non-custodial parent that they surrender their passport before visiting the child.

5. ***Keep child support and visitations as separate issues.*** Avoid antagonizing your ex-spouse by withholding visitations based on support payments alone. Respect your ex-spouse’s visitation rights. Ensure that your child always has sufficient money with them in order to use a public phone...Add an identification card and telephone numbers where you may be reached to your child’s personal effects...Keep a camera handy in order to photograph your child when leaving for a visit. If possible film the automobile used (including plate number) and any other passenger present in the car. If a camera is not handy, maintain a dated diary of each visit...After returning from visits, discuss the activities and outings with your child, show interest without prying.
6. ***“Do not ignore any abduction threat.*** Document the threats by having a witness, by tape-recording the event, or by keeping a log with the date, time and a detailed description of the scenario. Inform teachers, police, friends, etc., of your concerns.” (Not My Child, J. Wagner, 1994).
7. ***“Be on the alert for sudden changes*** in your ex-spouse’s life. Trust your intuition. Quitting a job or selling a home may be a preparation to run off.” (Not My Child, J. Wagner, 1994).
8. ***If you fear a potential abduction, start preparing yourself now*** by compiling the pertinent information concerning your spouse, your child and your marital status....A clearly organized chronological record is an essential tool for the process...Summarize the history and the development of your relations with your ex-spouse, starting from your meeting until present. Note the birth of your ex-spouse, your child(ren), immigration processes, the deterioration of your relationship, the implication signs of a potential abduction, etc. Keep all originals (in a safe place) and always have two copies of each document on hand for distribution purposes. Review and update your information regularly.

Parental abduction

- a. Legal documents - the following legal documents should be kept for your records : custody or visitation order ; divorce or separation decree ; birth certificate of each child ; passport(s) ; police report(s) ; report(s) to social services ; any other legal document or private agreement ; lawyer's business card.
- b. Procedures - The MCNC recommends that you document all steps already taken concerning this matter and proceed to each new step by recording : date, time; name of the individual contacted; position; office; telephone number; summary of the conversation; reply forthcoming; follow-up to be done.
- c. Documents - Keep a copy of all correspondence received or sent (date the items).
- d. Narrative - Document the child's (children's) narrative after the return visit to the non-custodial parent: e.g. individuals met, visits, projected trips, secrets... as well as critical remarks or changes in attitude.

9. Maintain records on your ex-spouse, such as :

- a. Personal information - Full name at birth, surname and initials, other names used, aliases, date and place of birth, relationship to the child, languages spoken and written.
- b. Physical description - Color of eyes, natural color of hair, height, weight, broadness, squareness of shoulders and jaw, dental health, appearance, racial origin.
- c. Special characteristics - Eyeglasses, contact lenses, birthmarks, scars, pierced ear(s) (be specific), tattoo(s), mustache, beard, speech impediment, allergies, medication(s), disabilities, chronic illnesses or diseases, medical history (name of physician or specialist and their telephone number), etc.;
- d. Civil identification - medicare number, social insurance number, citizenship, passport(s) number(s), immigration status, driver's license number, present address (checked?), telephone number (checked?), present/previous employer (checked?), trade or profession, education, sources of revenue other than from employment (companies, real estate, stocks and shares, investments, etc.), banking information (banks, branches, number(s) of account(s), credit cards), recent significant purchase or sales, level of financial autonomy, vehicle(s) (registration, description, year, plate number, etc.), previous address(es), religion (practicing?), criminal record, police report(s), report(s) to social services, sports (association), hobbies, business trip and any other information identifying this person. If the spouse is presently living with a new person, compile a similar record on this person. In most custodial kidnappings a close friend or relative of your ex-spouse knows where the child is.

The Missing Children's Network Canada also suggest that you develop your spouse's family tree (with a family photograph if possible - review wedding pictures and invitations if necessary), including uncles, aunts, cousins, or new person they are living with as well as any pertinent information you can gather about them. Make sure the information contained in these records is updated regularly and kept in a safe place (safety deposit box or with a trusted friend or relative).

10. Maintain records on your child(ren), such as :

- a. Personal info - Full name at birth, surname, date and place of birth, sex.
- b. Physical description - Color of eyes, hair, height, weight, dental health records, racial origin, languages spoken and written;
- c. Special characteristics - Eyeglasses, birthmarks, scars, freckles, pierced ear(s) (be specific), speech impediment, learning problem(s), allergies, medication(s), disabilities, chronic illnesses or diseases, etc.;
- d. Other pertinent info - Medical history (name of physician or specialist), Medicare number, social insurance number, citizenship - passport(s) number(s), country, religion, last school and grade attended, list of hobbies, sports, friends names, address and phone numbers, dated photograph and/or video....If your child does not have their own passport, have them registered under your own passport...you may also request an objection notice from the Canadian passport bureau in order that your child may be registered on the control list - this will stop any attempt from your ex-spouse to obtain a Canadian passport for your child(ren).

11. "Calmly discuss the potential abduction problem with your child. Discuss parental abduction just as you would any personal safety rule. Explain to the child that anger between both parents is not their fault. Make sure they know you will always love them and want them with you even if the other parent tells them that you don't. Make sure your children know that if they were taken it would be against your will and that you will look for them until you find them." (Not My Child, J. Wagner, 1994)

"Make sure your child knows their complete name, address and telephone number (including area code). Teach your child how to make long-distance calls. Let them know that you will always accept collect calls from wherever the calls originate." (MCNC)

Parental abduction

12. If an abduction has occurred, contact the proper authorities and begin your search immediately. MCNC suggests the following steps should be taken when confronted with a parental abduction. The list is solely to point out the main resources and means which may be undertaken to locate your child(ren) :

- a. Remain calm and request a relative's or a friend's assistance ;
- b. Contact your local police authorities and file a missing person's report ;
- c. Bring your information record (see steps #8, 9, 10) as well as a recent photograph of the sought-after spouse and child(ren) ;
- d. Bring copies of all pertinent legal documents to the police (see step #8) ;
- e. Record the name of the police officers who register your case as well as his or her badge number, report file number and station telephone number and the sergeant detective in charge of your dossier ;
- f. Request that the authorities issue an arrest warrant for the abducting parent in accordance with the penal code. Obtain its number as soon as the crown prosecutor(s) has issued one.
- g. If you do not have legal custody of the child(ren), instruct your lawyer to obtain an interim custody order immediately.
- h. Even before obtaining an arrest warrant, make sure the police officer in charge of the dossier immediately registers the name of the sought-after parent with the Missing Children's Registry ☎ (613) 993-1525 who will then enter the child on the Canadian Police Information Center.
- i. If you believe the child and the abducting parent are in the United States, make sure the police officer has registered the search warrant on the American National Crime Information Computer, which is operated by the FBI.
- j. Question and record the responses of parents, friends, colleagues, neighbors about the abducting parent : changes in behavior, signs indicating a potential abduction (requesting money, selling personal goods, etc.).

- k. Complete a search record in which you will enter progress notes of the steps taken. In as detailed a manner as possible, document the following information in your records : date and time of disappearance; place of disappearance; description of child(ren), spouse or any other associated person at the time of disappearance; circumstances (violence?); possible destination and probable method of transport; steps taken; List of all phone numbers required; police officers contacted; family and friends contacted; parents and friends of spouse contacted; passport bureau, external affairs, etc.; photographs distributed to media, posters, etc.
- l. Contact The Missing Children's Network Canada ☎ (514) 843-4333 in order to register your missing child(ren) and to obtain assistance and support in your search.
- m. Contact the media directly so photographs of your child(ren) will be distributed as widely and as frequently as possible. In case of an international abduction, contact the Department of Consular Operations External Affairs Canada ☎ (613) 992-1152 and the Department of Legal Affairs, Quebec Ministry of Justice ☎ (418) 664-7152



Does your child know...

- ***How to attract attention to themselves, if kidnapped & placed in a moving vehicle?***
- ***That gifts given to a child should have no strings attached.***
- ***What a 'Block Parent' sign looks like?***
- ***The difference between 'good' and 'bad' touches & 'okay' & 'tell' secrets?***



"Remember that the use of awareness is a skill that must be developed & practiced like any other good habit." (Protecting Children..., Bishop & Thomas, 1993)