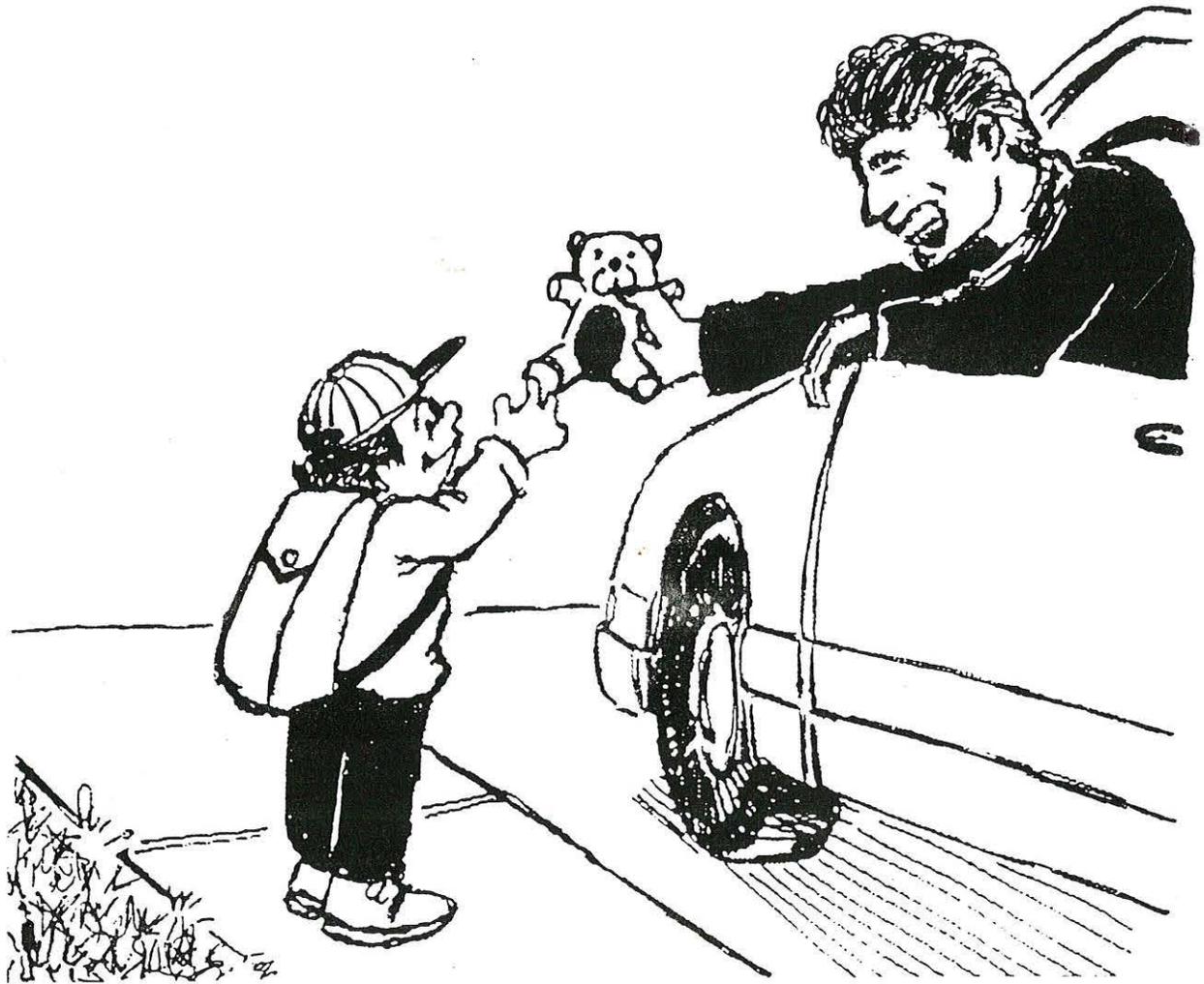


STREET SAFE KIDS

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

Street Safe Strategies

Stats: Children - (a) 75-90% of sexual assault cases involving children are not reported to the proper authorities. (b) According to Pauzé and Mercier, there are 8 girls for every 2 boys who are victims of sexual assault. (c) There are 1,600 active missing children's cases at any one time throughout Canada. (d) Nationally - there are about 55,000 reported missing children yearly throughout Canada (70 cases or 1%) are criminal/non-family abductions; 400 cases or 3% are parental abductions; 96% are runaways). **Adults** - (a) In the U.S.A., 5 out of 6 people will be the victims of a violent or attempted violent assault; (b) 1 out of 3 women will be sexually assaulted by the age of 45.

Abuse can be prevented. The safety of your children is your responsibility. It is our duty as parents to educate our children about certain topics that are beneficial to their wellbeing. Young children should never be left unattended. They see parents as their best source of information. By working together, you can replace your child's fears with empowering knowledge and information. Case studies of children who have been molested indicate that the abuse could have been prevented in many cases if the child had had prior instruction. Lack of knowledge and uncertainty about what to do and how to handle particular situations can play a role in a child's victimization.

Does your child attract danger ? Ask yourself the following 15 questions in order to assess your child's personal defense mechanisms against abduction and sexual abuse. Get the whole family involved in the safety awareness questions presented here and in the 'Street Safe manual review' section later on in this manual. Answer with: 'Yes,' 'No,' 'Sometimes.' Once completed, focus on the lifesaving adjustments your family and children must make in order to avoid becoming a victim of crime.

1. Do you involve yourself in the safety education of your child? _____
2. Does your child have a safety plan to avoid becoming a victim of crime? _____
3. Does your child have a solid understanding of the family safety rules? _____
4. Does your child have a solid sense of their own rights and limitations? _____
5. Is your child an unhappy child, starved for adult attention and affection? _____
6. Does your child blindly obey adults without questioning them? _____
7. Does your child trust or follow their own protective instincts? _____
8. Is your child a loner? _____
9. Does your child take shortcuts or play in isolated areas? _____
10. While walking, does your child pay attention to their surroundings? _____

1. Talk about safety issues

11. Does your child know the 3 street safe questions they should ask themselves? _____
(a) Do I have a 'yes' or 'no' feeling about the situation? (b) Does an adult I trust know where I am and what I'm doing? (c) If I go or do what is asked of me, can I get help if I need it?
12. Can your child moderately assess and handle a wide variety of situations? _____
13. Does your child know how and where to get help at any time? _____
14. Does your child know they will be believed if they tell and something will be done? _____
15. Does your child know you love them? _____ Have you told them today? _____

The following 30 street safe strategies will help you convey the essential information to your child(ren). If they are approached or if faced with a questionable situation they will have the necessary knowledge to keep themselves safe.

1. TALK ABOUT SAFETY ISSUES

"Show me a child who knows nothing about sex and I'll show you my next victim." Safety issues are not a one-time subject. Most children will not be able to absorb the information and meaning of the various topics all at once. Studies have shown that ignoring the subject puts children at a serious disadvantage when confronted with a possible high stress or questionable situation. That is why it pays to take time and use the proper occasions to talk over real safety issues with your child on different aspects of sexual assault, street safety, various touches, etc.

"Safety instructions are repeated day in day out over a period of time, until the child follows them as a matter of course, understanding that they represent a parent's caring, not punishment. Such teaching is really part of establishing family policy. We need to tell them over and over again that if they take reasonable precautions, the odds are good that they will be safe...When talking to older children remember that you are not just transmitting information; you are dealing with attitudes about life and the world. Over a period of time, as you talk gradually about personal safety, you will give your child an awareness of the issues which are part of the lives of all of us...If coping with dangers is not discussed openly by parents, your child will seek information elsewhere. He or she may hear scary stories from friends or other parents. The information may not be either accurate or helpful and it could unnecessarily frighten a child." (*How To Raise...*, Hechinger, 1985).

Such open discussion about possible sexual assaults, molestation cases or street safety procedures tells the child that the subject is not too embarrassing to be discussed in the home. If you occasionally discuss such sensitive topics it may encourage your child to express their concerns about a puzzling relationship they or a friend are having with an adult.

2. YOUR CHILD WILL BE ALONE - HAVE A PLAN

Does the assailant have a plan of action prior to attacking or approaching his victim? YES. Shouldn't you and your family members also have a plan of action? It is too late to think about viable options once the assault begins. It is your responsibility to ensure that you and your children have some sort of simple, realistic plan of action before an attack occurs. In most assault situations the targeted victim has very little if any time to prepare - so planning a course of action prior to a close encounter of the worst kind is critical for survival and success.

That is why we stress the fact that your child must be taught to think for themselves and safely manage their privacy, because when it happens, chances are they will be all alone to face the danger or uncomfortable situation. Building our children's capacity for self-reliance (which is based on self-esteem) is one of the best approaches to protecting children from danger.

"In every case during the abuse, the child is isolated from adults who can help them. The child is essentially a prisoner (a form of temporary abduction) until the adult decides that the encounter is over...*The bottom line is*: your child must have the knowledge, the skills, and the confidence to use his or her own judgment to keep him or herself safe." (Not My Child, J. Wagner, 1994).

It is very difficult for anyone to rely on one single plan of action for all confrontations. There is no single full-proof response to all assault situations. Your child must be prepared to respond in the safest, most prudent way to ensure that they survive the confrontation, whether the assailant wants only their valuables or both their valuables and their life.

All your family members must have simple, effective options already stored in their mental computer and ready to use. Criminals use 'fear,' 'uncertainty' and 'doubt' to complete most personal crimes. They know that most people caught off-guard become extremely *fearful* when confronted, are *uncertain* about what to do when confronted, and *doubt* their mental and physical abilities to do anything but obey the assailant's demands. The more ways your family members learn to outsmart an assailant, the more confident they will become. Mental imaging, role playing and 'hands-on' luring and attack simulations are some of the most practical, effective ways to prepare for an actual threat of criminal victimization.

Parent/child activity - The 'what if..?' role-playing game (refer to p. 106 for details) : Use the 'What if..?.' role playing game and other inter-active games outlined in this manual to help you teach your child what to safely do and how to safely react when alone. Education, knowledge and training will help your child face and avoid the majority of questionable situations.

3. DEVELOP A FAMILY PLAN TO CRIME PREVENTION

Plans work. Make sure to include your children in your planning process. The essential elements of your family safety plan, should advise and guide family members on safety rules and issues so that an assailant would not gain the upper hand in any given situation. Your children should know what to do when home alone, playing outside, if lost in a mall, how and who to seek help from, how to safely react if approached, etc.

It is essential for parents to create a family team approach to safety. With good communication, all family members are able to share ideas and feelings, look out for and protect each other. The involvement of all family members is essential if the personal safety and crime prevention objectives of the family are to be reached. The following pointers can guide you into making your own family safety plan.

Home :

1. Establish home safety rules for locking doors & windows & for answering the door and phone:

Does your child know : How to use a key? How and when to call 9-1-1 or '0'?

How to use various types of phones (pay, rotary, cellular, etc.) & phone book?

When calling 9-1-1 or '0,' if they sense danger approaching - leave the phone off the hook & move?

The neighbors (if not introduce them)? What to do when the police arrive?

2. Establish **home alone** safety rules: Answering the door and phone, having friends over, etc.

3. Establish a family atmosphere where members are open and willing to listen to each other.

Do family members : Share personal problems and seek advice from each other?

Discuss likely entry points for an intruder? Make it a family project to make these entries more difficult.

Blame others and deny responsibility for mistakes made?

Discuss local news, talk about safety prevention and what to do if kidnapped?

Remind each other if a family safety rule was broken?

Inform each other if they have a change of plan?

Feel it is important to be responsible and dependable?

4. Prepare an emergency kit : Updated photos and videos of family members.

Place telephone emergency list next to phone (see assignment section for phone list).

Child identification card (plastified I.D.) to be carried in parent's wallet or purse.

Did you make a mental note of what your child was wearing before they left ?

5. Emphasize that parental permission is required before going anywhere (to check first with you).

Do you know where the child is going and who they will be with (teach by example).

Ask them to call you when they reach their destination, prior to heading home & if there is a change in plans.

Get to know their friends and their friends' parents.



3. Develop a family plan to crime prevention

6. Establish a family plan of action for some of the following situations:
- a. A burglar breaks into your home while everyone is sleeping. Discuss likely entry/exit points?
 - Role play what to do (during the day & at night) if an intruder comes.
 - Role play what to do if they arrive home and surprise an intruder in the house?
 - Where should child(ren) go if they see the intruder? Suggest various locations.
 - Role-play with your children what to do when police arrive.
 - b. What to do in case of fire, injury, someone missing, etc.
 - Role play what to do in case of fire (stop, drop and roll).
 - c. A family check system to secure your home at bedtime.
 - d. If you have a home security system, do family members know how to turn it on/off?
 - Do they know where the panic button is and its purpose?
 - Role play what to do if an emergency arises and they must use the security system.
7. Establish the importance of having 'No touching secrets, ever' - To tell and keep telling.

School :

1. Establish school, car and bus safety rules.
2. Establish school pick-up rules with child and absenteeism notification rules with school.
3. Establish a family code word or identify specific people who will pick up child after school.
4. Latchkey child: establish phoning and home alone routine (see homework section for details).

Street and public places :

1. Emphasize parental permission required before going anywhere (check first with you).
2. Emphasize taking the same route home, never taking shortcuts or accepting rides.
3. Avoid carrying or flashing valuable items while walking.
4. Make sure your child's name is not displayed on their clothes.
5. Emphasize the importance of: No dialogue between child and an unknown adult.
6. Stress the use of the buddy system - always travel with a friend.
7. While walking, accentuate the importance of paying attention, head up, walking tall, etc.
8. Following and trusting our instincts should be reiterated.
9. Does child know the safe/dangerous areas and who to seek help from in public locations?
10. Establish a code word in case someone tries to pick up your child on your behalf (emergency lure).
11. If approached, stay out of reach of people approaching you (one grown-up's arms length + 3 steps).
12. Have a lost and found plan when in a public place. Remind them to never leave the area.
13. Know how to attract attention to yourself if kidnapped (in vehicle, apartment, etc.).
14. Does your child understand that they are allowed to do whatever it takes to be safe.

4. KNOW WHAT TO DO IF YOUR CHILD IS MISSING

Discuss with your child what should be done in case you are ever separated in a public place. Establish some sort of *'lost and found'* plan with specific guidelines to follow in order to find each other quickly and without getting hysterical.

If going to a public gathering, your child should carry some form of identification card. They should also be instructed : (a) To stay by your side; (b) To stay within eye sight while walking, establishing eye contact with you every couple of minutes, if possible; (c) If child wishes to do something (looking at items, play a game, go for a drink of water, etc.), they should inform the care-giver first; (d) If separated from the group, child should be told to seek assistance from people working at the public area (cashier, salesman, etc.), (e) Never, ever leave the public area with anyone from whom they sought help. (f) Remind them that you will not stop looking for them.

If you believe your child may be missing, you must take **immediate action**. Time is of the essence. Staying calm is a priority in order to seek assistance, think clearly and communicate thoroughly with people wanting to help you. Here is a simple emergency plan of action to follow if your child is lost or missing:

If your child is lost in a mall or a public gathering :

1. Seek assistance from people located in the mall, public gathering or store (security guards, store clerks or managers, etc.), informing them of the missing child. If the location has an intercom or speaker system, use it to call the child. Try to get as many people involved in your search as possible.
2. Give authorities and people helping you an accurate description of your child. This is why you should: (a) Always make a mental note of what your child is wearing; (b) Carry in your wallet or purse a plastified child identification card or a recent photo of your child.
3. You and the people helping should check nearby locations first, then fan out throughout the area. Make sure someone who can recognize or knows the child stays behind in case your child shows up looking for you.
4. When the child is found, don't cause a scene right there and then. Instead: (a) Let the child know you are overjoyed to have located them; (b) Praise them for not having left the public area once separated; (c) Remind them that you would have never given up looking for them; (d) Go over what had caused this separation, and what corrections must be made for such a situation to never happen again; (e) Discuss together the general location points to meet or what to do if you were ever separated again.

4. Know what to do if your child is missing

If your child is missing or has run away :

1. Act immediately, don't waste any precious time. Call locations where you think your child might be. Leave no stone unturned. Calmly retrace the last known steps your child took.
2. Call 9-1-1, informing them of the missing child emergency. You will be questioned by the 9-1-1 operator. Stay calm, answer as completely as possible the questions asked. Answer all questions honestly, clearly relating the circumstances leading up to your child's disappearance. This information will be relayed via computer to the officer(s) receiving the call.
3. A missing persons report will have to be filled out with the assistance of the police officers responding to the call. This detailed report and other pertinent information on your child will be sent via computer to every police car patrolling the area as well as the CPIC (Canadian Police Information Center) and NCIC (National Crime Information Center). Make sure you have:
 - a. Police report number, officers names and badge numbers.
 - b. Investigating officer in charge of dossier.
 - c. Station telephone number where investigating officer can be reached.
 - d. Investigators working schedule - days, shift work, etc.
 - e. What actions or follow up will be done?
4. Give authorities and people helping (friends, neighbors and relatives), an accurate description of your child. This is why you should: (a) Always make a mental note of what your child is wearing; (b) Carry in your wallet or purse a plastified child identification card or a recent photo of your child. For preschoolers, the picture should be no more than three to five months old; for teenagers, no more than a year old. (c) Have an up-to-date child identification booklet filled with pertinent information of your child.
5. Consider involving 'The Missing Children's Network Canada' in your search. You can reach them at ☎ (514) 843-4333. They will know what to do and will immediately begin assisting you. MCNC is associated with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children in the U.S.A. ☎ (1-800-843-5678), which has the ability to get the information out from coast to coast, about your missing child. Consider involving the media: radio, television and newspapers in your quest.
6. Keep in close touch with the detective responsible for your dossier. Call regularly for an update on the situation.

4. Know what to do if your child is missing

Prepare the following items for your emergency missing child kit :

- a. A recent high quality frontal view photo of your child (head and shoulder shot).
- b. An updated videotape of your child - featuring child's voice and mannerisms.
- c. A plastified child identification card which you carry in your wallet or purse.
- d. A 'Child Identification Booklet' filled with pertinent updated information on your child.
- e. Have an identification bracelet made for your child. The bracelet can be similar to the medical alert bracelet and can be worn around your child's wrist or ankle. The personalized information on the bracelet should be engraved on the inside so that strangers can't read the details from far away. The following information should be engraved on the bracelet:
 - ➔ The child's name;
 - ➔ Your home phone number including area code;
 - ➔ 'Missing child REWARD.'
 - ➔ A special mark to make the bracelet unique.

The identification bracelet can help when...

- ➔ Your child is injured or can't communicate for whatever reason. It will speak for the child, getting the concerned person to contact you.
- ➔ If your child is abducted they can drop or leave the bracelet anywhere people are around: restaurant, city street, grocery store, in a mall, etc. They can even throw the bracelet out of the vehicle at someone. The bracelet technique should be used by the child only after several hours into the abduction.

If the bracelet is found and reported, it will provide the police with valuable information on the direction of flight. If someone calls you stating they have located the bracelet, make sure you get the following information from them:

- ➔ Exactly where it was found (city, province, address);
- ➔ Name, address, phone number of person who found bracelet;
- ➔ Time and date of the finding;
- ➔ Offer a monetary reward payable after the police have received the bracelet.