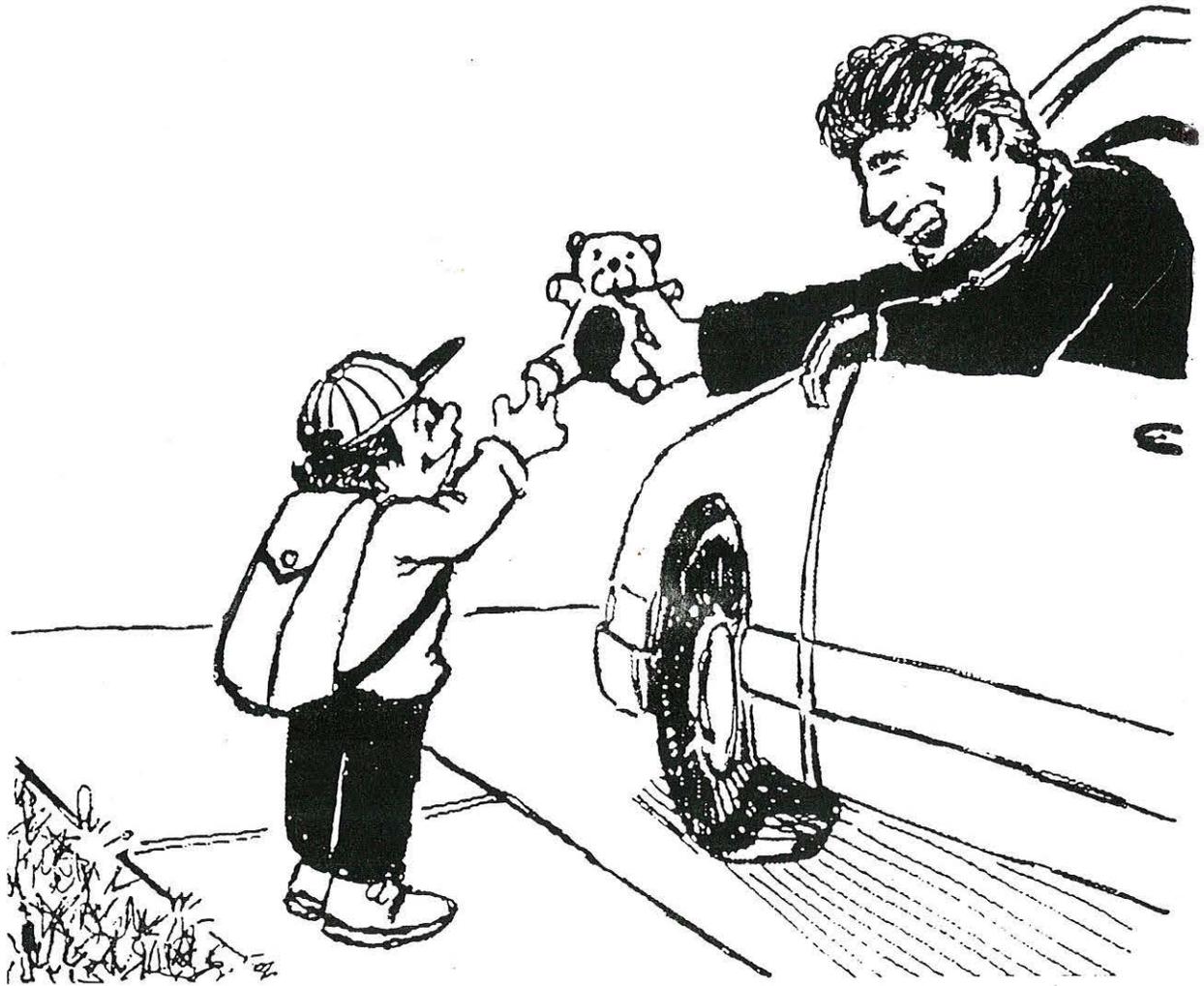


STREET SAFE KIDS

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

11. USE THE BUDDY SYSTEM



What is a 'Buddy system'? There is strength in numbers. A mugger, rapist or abductor is much less likely to confront a group of kids who stick together than one child alone. If a problem arises, the second child is not only a viable witness but can also go for help or assist the victim. If confronted with a questionable situation and a decision needs to be made, two heads are better than one. Several children together are harder to handle for a potential kidnapper than a lone child. Why attack a group of kids when there are plenty of strays available. A word of advice: don't let the 'Buddy system' become your child's total defense mechanism creating a false sense of security when they are out and about. As stated earlier, self-reliance is one of the best approaches to protecting children from danger.

Learn to use the company of dogs and other buddies to keep you and your child safe. Dogs are not only one of the best buddies a child can have but also one of the best deterrents against crime. Imaginary buddies can be effectively used by your child or yourself when leaving any location alone. You can wait for a group of other people heading out of the building and blend into the group. When home alone prior to answering the door you can create an imaginary buddy by yelling out "Dad, I'll get it." Stats : You can reduce your chances of being attacked by nearly 70% if you walk with another person and by 90% if you're with two other individuals. Young children should never travel without an adult buddy.

12. ALWAYS USE THE SAME ROUTE HOME

Never take shortcuts. Better to arrive a few minutes late than never arrive at all. Cutting through parks and alleyways allows the potential assailant to have privacy and intimacy with your child. Instruct your child to stick to their regular safe routes home or from school and to directly go to their destination. By taking the same route home every day, your child can familiarize themselves with safe locations along their route (i.e., Block Parents, businesses, relatives, friends, etc.). If your child uses their regular route home, you as a parent, can predict approximately how long it will take them to reach their destination. If, God forbid, your child ever goes missing, you and the proper authorities can systematically and thoroughly dissect the regularly traveled area in search for the child.

Parent/child activity - Traveled route : Walk the regularly traveled school route with your child at their pace and speed. While walking together, inquire about: (a) Locations your child feels are safe or dangerous. Why do they feel that way? Would such locations be easy or hard to reach? What kind of safety do such places provide? (b) Which safe strangers would they approach for help? How would they ask for help? What happens if that person does not want to get involved - what other options are available? Together visit some of the safe locations you both agreed upon in order to familiarize your child with the surroundings and the people who regularly travel that route.

13. NO DIALOGUE BETWEEN CHILD AND STRANGER

Regardless of how the would-be abductor operates, if the child allows absolutely 'no dialogue' between themselves and an approaching stranger, then no verbal lure can be exercised on them (a stranger adult or child is someone they know nothing about). When approached, your child must stay a safe distance away (one grown-up's arms' length plus 3 steps) and make the interaction between themselves and the approaching stranger nonexistent or as brief as possible. The longer the interaction lasts, the higher the chances of the child being lured, bullied or abducted. The more the dialogue continues, the more engaged the child becomes in the offender's plan of action. Reiterate the fact that a troubled child will approach an adult for assistance and help and not the adult who approaches the unattended, distracted child for a helping hand.

Your child must simply not allow any dialogue. Putting an end to the conversation, significantly reduces the chances of being seduced or lured by strangers and empowers the child with control over the interaction. If a dialogue starts, all the child has to do is say 'no,' and walk away. No matter what lure is used, the child renders it ineffective. Your child should look away uninterested, continue walking, and if necessary, do whatever they have to in order to get out of the questionable situation. If grabbed or dragged, they should yell 'Fire,' bite, kick, drop to the floor, log roll away, kicking, screaming, throwing things and biting.

In order to be effective, a child must make the encounter with the would-be assailant as brief as possible. No matter where the child is, what kind of lure is being used, or how serious the confrontation is, the longer your child interacts with the would-be aggressor, the worse their chances are of successfully handling the questionable situation and escaping at times serious injury or death.



"It is important for children to recognize actions and situations that warn of danger rather than being taught to be wary of particular types of individuals. Children are very literal, and when you use the word 'stranger,' they may think of someone who seems 'strange' or makes them 'feel funny' in some way. By learning the dangers of actions and situations, children can recognize similar degrees of danger, whether they come from a friend, acquaintance, or a stranger....What we must be aware of are any actions or words that attempt to mislead us. From this perspective we can see that in some situations signs of deception can also be specific signs of danger." (Protecting Children From Danger, Bishop & Thomas, 1993).

13. No dialogue between child and stranger

Remind your child : If they are not sure what to do in any situation, they should always : (a) 'Check first' with a trusted adult. (b) Ask themselves the 3 street safe questions prior to going or doing anything with anyone: (1) Do I have a 'yes' or 'no' feeling about the situation? (2) Does an adult I trust know where I am and what I'm doing? (3) If I go or do what is asked of me, can I get help if I need it? If the answer to any one of these 3 questions is 'NO,' then the child should not do what is being asked of them. (c) Quickly make a decision on the questionable situation, then take action by making the encounter as brief as possible, saying 'No,' (or any other expression which will help them assert themselves), then seek a safe haven.

Parent/child activity #1 - Disconnecting from an engaging stranger : Test your child's ability to disconnect themselves from an engaging stranger. Entice your child with a variety of luring lines which might bait them to respond. Have them show you how they would 'stop the dialogue' and get out of there, seeking help. Use the section in this manual called 'How Pedophiles lure our children' (p. 25) to guide you. Remember to make your luring suggestions age appropriate.

Parent/child activity #2 - Keeping a safe distance : Practice setting personal boundaries with your child. An adult approaches the child, and the child pretends the adult is someone they don't know. Adult approaches, child maintains a safe distance. The rule of thumb for children is, always keep one grown-up's arms length away plus 3 steps from someone they don't know.

- ➔ An adult approaches the child, slowly at first and then quickly. The child steps back, keeping the optimum distance and yelling 'no' as the adult persists in approaching. Place obstacles in the path of the retreating child so he must stay aware of his surroundings as he backs up (pillows, toys, etc.).
- ➔ You can also go a step further and allow the adult to grab the child by the arm or pick them up attempting to carry them off. The child should respond in a loud voice, 'No!' 'This person is not my father (or mother)!' The child can try dropping to the floor or continue to yell, bite, kick, etc., until the adult lets go or someone comes to help.

Parent/child activity #3 - Learning to say 'No' : We must teach our children to exercise their own authority, to know which adults to question and who to say 'No!' to. Start with two children (or adult and child) facing each other in pairs. Have one say 'Yes!' while the other says 'No!' Go back and forth (yes/no) with increasing volume and energy. After about half a minute, have children switch roles. Alternate the 'Yes!' players, encouraging them to be verbally forceful with the 'No!' child. The child continues to say 'No!' or other assertive responses they feel comfortable with.

Reminder : Try to also develop the assertive body language that goes with the forceful 'No!'



14. TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS



Instinct is our bodies natural warning system - our radar. It is that deep, annoying, and uncomfortable feeling that we get in our stomachs (increased heartbeat, butterflies in the stomach, adrenaline rush, etc.), warning us of a potential danger lying ahead. Once the instinct bell is sounded during high stress situations, the sudden rush of adrenaline makes us instinctively do one of two things, run away or stay and fight. Adrenaline is a valuable self-defense tool which the body naturally supplies. It can make a person run faster, scream louder, punch harder, and create unknown strength in even the smallest body.

When reviewing assault cases, the point that seems to come out over and over again with victims of crime is that often, before an attack occurs, the victim somehow feels that something bad is going to happen. This inner feeling is referred to as: *the little voice within, intuition, instinct, 6th sense or funny feelings.*

A child's safety increases with their ability to identify, trust and act on their gut feeling. Children are especially intuitive and can often sense that someone or some situation is strange, bad or scary without having to be told. By being aware and alert and listening to their instincts, they may even deter a potential attacker or stop the abuse before it begins by exposing the incident. Such basic instincts are among everyone's best protection.

"The health and strength of each child's 'voice from within' is partly determined by how well the voice is listened to and developed, both by the child and the parent, teacher or friend." (*Feeling Yes, Feeling No*, NFBC).

As a parent, you should not downplay your child's funny feelings or thoughts. Developing and nurturing your child's basic instincts of self preservation (fight or flight response) should be a vital goal in the family safety sessions. Children should be taught to respect and act accordingly on that gut feeling about people or questionable situations.

Remind your child: Once their internal alarm goes off, they should do whatever they have to in order to keep themselves safe. It does not take great athletic prowess to defend yourself successfully. Thinking on their feet and using their brain (making wise choices), is their most important natural defense, more powerful than their fists and legs.



- ➔ *Have you prepared an emergency missing child kit? (Refer to p. 62 for details).*
- ➔ *Does your child wear an ID. bracelet with their name, phone No. & REWARD engraved on it?*
- ➔ *Does your child know the 3 street safe questions they should ask themselves prior to going or doing anything with anyone? (Refer to the bottom of p. 151 for details).*