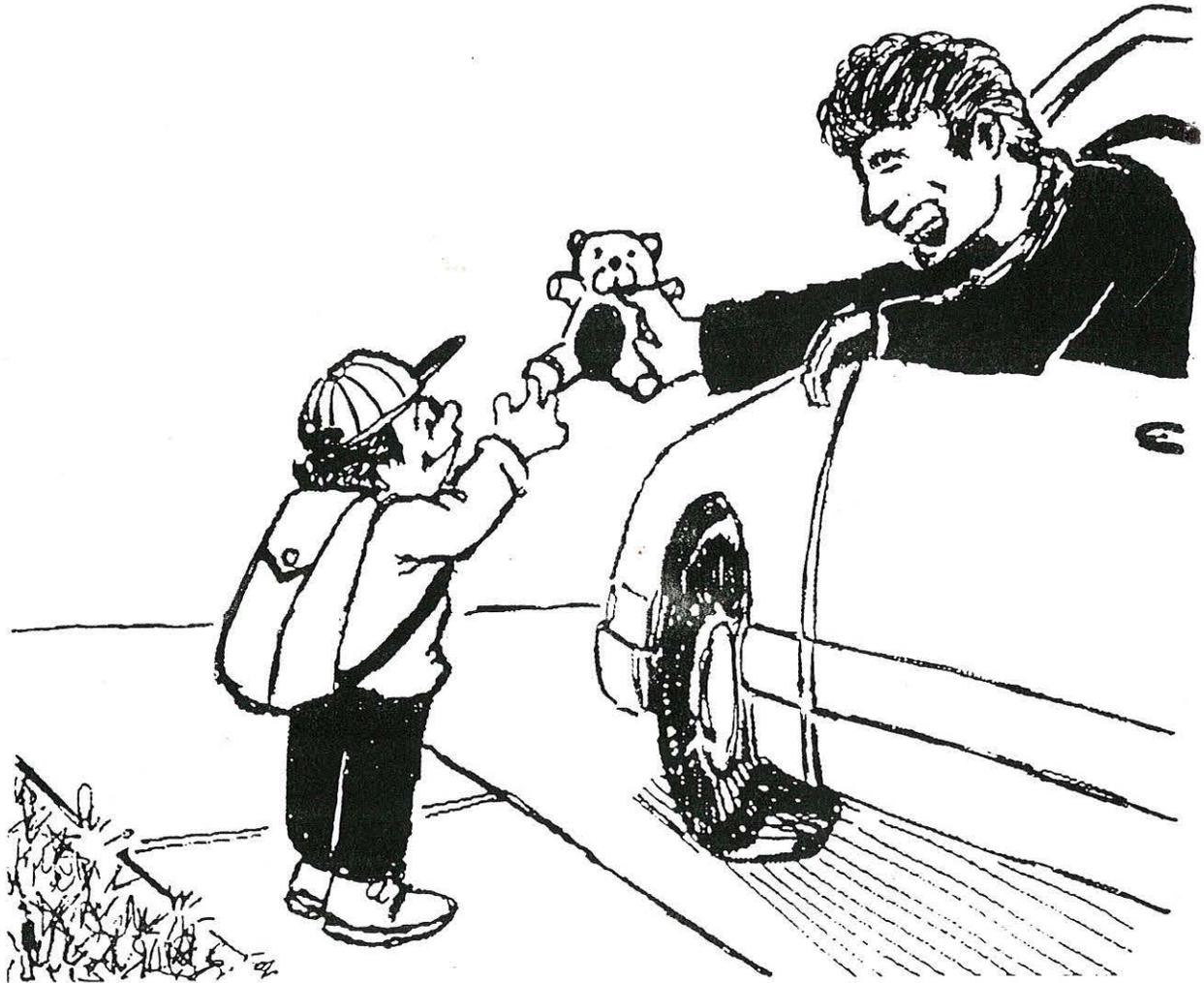


# ***STREET SAFE KIDS***

*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**

## 23. IF ABDUCTED, KNOW HOW TO ATTRACT ATTENTION

**Facts about abductions :** The first 10 minutes after a stranger abduction are the most crucial. Thereafter, the odds of ever finding a child (dead or alive) begin to drop off dramatically. The battle of survival is between the child and the abductor. The abductor is in control, not the police or mommy or daddy. Second in charge of the situation is the abducted child. The following ideas were taken from Robert Stuber's book "Missing! Stranger Abduction," Smart Strategies To Keep Your Child Safe, 1996.

1. **Car abductions :** It's a pretty sure bet to assume that if a child is abducted, at some point or other they will be transported in some type of vehicle, most likely a car, van or pickup truck. When teaching children about car abductions you should cover the following three points: (a) How to escape from a vehicle; (b) How to disable a vehicle; (c) How to draw attention to yourself.

### ***How to escape from a car - your child should know :***

- a. How to turn the ignition key to 'ACC' (accessories) position, in order to operate the power windows. Power doors can be opened manually without this process.
- b. How to remove keys from the ignition slot prior to getting out of the parked car. Once out, throw away the keys. Run screaming for a safe haven or a place to hide.
- c. How to unlock different vehicle doors.
- d. How to open different vehicle doors.
- e. How to operate power and manual windows as well as sunroof locks.
- f. If child is placed in a car trunk : (1) Child should know how to disconnect any exposed wires (yank them with a quick and powerful pull) causing tail and/or brake lights to fail which increase the probability of the abduction vehicle being pulled over by the police. (2) Child could continually kick the section of the trunk where the tail or brake lights are located, causing the light to fail or break off. (3) If car pulls over, child should yell 'help' or continuously kick the roof or side of trunk. (4) Child might be able to use tools left in trunk either as a weapon, to attract attention with by either continuously striking the roof or side of trunk or in disabling the tail or brake lights by cutting or damaging the exposed wires.





***How to disable a car :***

Disabling a kidnapper's car serves several purposes in favor of the abducted child: (a) It draws attention to the car. (b) It causes service personnel (mechanics, tow trucks, other drivers, etc.) to get involved. (c) It can force the abductor and the child to walk, rather than benefit from a quick get-away. (d) It changes the abductor's plan of action. (e) It increases the child's odds of being found or seen.

- a. Causing an accident gets others involved. To cause an accident the abducted child can either: (i) *Grab the steering wheel and forcefully jerk it left or right.* As soon as the vehicle starts to move, the child can jump into the driver's lap, kicking, screaming, biting and quickly removing the driver's hands from the steering wheel causing the car to run into something (a parked car, a mailbox, a moving car, a tree, etc.). Practice this maneuver with your child from the front and back seats of a car. (ii) *Push down on the gas pedal.* When the abductor's car is behind another vehicle stopped at a signal, or while the vehicle is moving slowly, the child could squat to the floor and push down the accelerator pedal with either their hands or feet (child places their hand(s) or foot on the abductor's foot, pushing down the accelerator pedal). This maneuver can cause a rear-end accident, causing other people to get involved in the situation. Causing an accident should be done when the vehicle is moving slowly due to the risk of fatal injury.
- b. Button maneuver : If child is left alone in vehicle, they can pull off the smallest button on their clothing and insert that button into the ignition slot where the key goes. They then push the button in as far as possible (with their fingers or using another object). This will prevent the key from going in the ignition switch, so the abductor will be unable to start the vehicle. Other small items such as pebbles, fragments of wood or dirt found on the floor mats of most vehicles, etc., can also be used instead of a button to hinder the abductor from starting the car.
- c. Tearing dashboard wires : A child should know how to slide over to the driver side, reach up under the dashboard, grab a handful of wires, pull them forcefully in order to break them loose (can be performed either when the vehicle is moving or stationary). This should render the vehicle immobile.
- d. Flooding the engine : If child is left alone in vehicle, they should know how to pump the gas pedal (repeatedly and quickly - for as long as possible), to cause the engine to flood. This will not work on vehicles with fuel injection - 1970 models on. When the child begins this procedure, they should continue to check to see if the abductor is returning to the vehicle.

## 23. If abducted - Attracting attention

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- e. Turning on the headlights (draining the battery) : If possible, child can turn on the headlights when leaving the vehicle, causing the battery to run down and possibly involve service personnel.

### ***Drawing attention while in a moving vehicle - child could :***

- a. Write the word "HELP" backwards on a foggy window (mirror image).
- b. Throw stuff out the window (paper, bracelet, hat, etc.).
- c. Hang seat belt or clothing out the door.
- d. Child could pick their nose until it bleeds. Allow the blood to drip all over their clothing. People who see the blood-stained clothing will be alerted.
- e. Blood can also be used to write 'HELP' on child's arm or hand. Abductor may decide to discard or clean the blood-stained clothing, or go to a store and replace the clothing. This creates opportunities for escape or rescue.
- f. Wanting to go to the washroom - requiring the vehicle to stop.
- g. Faking stomach cramps, seizures, etc., requiring medical assistance and attracting attention.
- h. If child is placed in the trunk of a car, they can place an article of clothing or a rag hanging out of the trunk while it's being shut in order to attract attention when the vehicle is moving.



## 2. ***Drawing attention to a house or room :***

A house is probably the most difficult place to escape from. The abductor is likely to have the house well-fortified against escape. Drawing attention to or sending a message from the house is most likely to be a child's best strategy. If the opportunity presents itself, the child should have an idea of how to escape especially if the abductor is gone or sleeping.

- a. ***Writing on closet walls and windows :*** Child should know how to write 'Help, Kidnapped' and their name in big letters. This can be written on windows and closet walls which reduces the chances of the abductor seeing it. Message may be found by the next people who use the room or house. The words can be scratched into the wall with a belt or shoe buckle, a coat hanger, a pen, a pointy object, etc. Child can also use blood, markers, paint, feces, soap, etc. to write with.

- b. Light switch - S.O.S. signal :** If child is locked in a room, they should know how to signal 'S.O.S.' with the light switch. 'S.O.S.' is the international distress signal for help. It was originally broadcast by Morse code over the telegraph by three short dots (for 'S'), three long dots (for 'O'), and three more short dots for 'S'. This is done repeatedly. 'S.O.S.' is known to stand for 'Save Our Souls', or on vessels as: 'Save Our Ship'. Reminder : For 'S.O.S.' signal, child should: (i) Open the curtains; (ii) Plug the space under the door so no one inside the house would see the light on or signaled; (iii) Signal repeatedly for as long as possible.
- c. Windows :** (i) Child should know how to unlock and open many different types of house windows. (ii) They should also not be afraid of smashing the window or climbing out of such windows. (iii) They should consider tying bed sheets together in order to get down from a second storey apartment. (iv) Throw items out of the windows to attract the attention of people passing by. (v) Using hard items to signal or smash neighbor's window if located in single family homes, one beside the other. (vi) Writing on the window (mirror-image) 'Help, Kidnapped, my name is...' if unable to alert the neighbors, either by opening or smashing their window.
- d. Doors :** Child should know how to unlock all kinds of doors, including screens and sliding doors with security devices.
- e. Flooding the toilet bowl, sink or bath :** Child can fill the bowl, sink or bath with paper or other practical items (toilet-paper roll, towels, baby toy, shirt, shoe, etc) and flush or let the water run. This should cause the toilet, sink or bathtub to overflow and keep running. The mess may alert neighbors downstairs, the building janitor, hotel/motel owner, and may even involve a plumber. The clogged toilet may preoccupy the abductor long enough for the child to escape or try other means to attract attention to the house. Child can write a message on the item they will be using to block the toilet with (e.g., 'Help...in closet'). The message on the clogging item may alert the repairman to the situation.
- f. Telephones :** If a telephone is available, the child should dial 9-1-1 (or '0'), telling the operator they have been kidnapped, then leave the receiver off the hook if the offender is nearby. The child does not have to state their location or name, but can do so to make sure the authorities go to the exact address. 9-1-1 generally has call and billing address display. Calling location will be traced and a police car will be sent. Talking to the operator is fine, as long as the abductor is not around. If the child hangs up after calling 9-1-1, chances are, the operator will call right back to see if everything is all right. This could alert the abductor and further jeopardize the child.

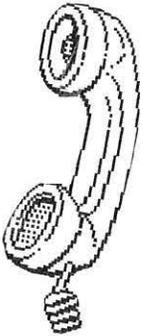


### 23. If abducted - Attracting attention

Once the child has called 9-1-1 (or '0'), they should leave a piece of clothing very close to the unhooked phone, preferably a shoe or a sock because they are easily identified as belonging to a child by anyone investigating the calls. They will wonder why the call was made and by whom.

Once awakened or startled by the knock on the door, chances are the abductor will put the child out of sight from the 9-1-1 investigator, who will want to know who made the call. The abductor will most likely deny making the call. The investigator will want to know whether anyone else is at home. The phone will be the focus of the 9-1-1 investigation.

*Public phones* : Your child should also know that no coins are required when dialing 9-1-1 or '0'. When using a public phone and the operator answers, the child should say "Help me, I've been kidnapped, my name is..." If time is on their side, they can give further details of their whereabouts, but if they feel their life is in danger they should drop the receiver (this allows the call to be traced), slip off a shoe and leave it in the phone booth or next to the phone, then run and hide or summon help. Inside the child's shoe, parents should write with a laundry marker the child's name, phone number and 'police.' The information on the shoe should help the police in tracking down the kidnapper and the child. If the abductor is traveling, the other shoe or other articles of clothing, such as a belt or headband, containing the same message can be left as a clue later. Clothing and message can be left anywhere (restaurants, service stations, etc.), not just in public phones. The message can even be handed to or thrown at other people.



#### ***Phones - Parents make sure...***

- ➔ Your child knows how to use various types of phones: rotary phones, pay phones, cellular phones, car phones, touch-tone phones, office and hotel or motel phones.
- ➔ Your child knows their first and last name (and your first and last name especially if they are different), address and area code plus their home phone number. Inform them that they must dial '1' or '0' for long distance calls, then area code and phone number. Teach them how to make collect calls and how to use a phone book.



**Parent/child activity - Phoning 9-1-1 or '0'** - Unplug your real phone and have your child call 9-1-1 or '0.' Play the part of the dispatcher inquiring what the emergency is, what location they are calling from, their name, their address, etc. Instruct your child to give as much information to the dispatcher as possible. Switch roles, teach by example. Refer to p.133 for added phone exercises.

**g. Leaving a message on hotel/motel pillows and bed sheets :** A child can pick their nose till it bleeds and write 'Help' on a bed sheet, pillow case, hotel towels, bath curtains, etc., for a hotel maid to find it. Bowel movement (feces) can also be used for writing. A piece of clothing can also be left behind, with a message written on it. They can also write 'Help' on a mirror or backwards on a window.

**h. Garbage can :** A child can write 'Help, Police, kidnapped' on just about anything, whenever possible and put it in the garbage in hope the collector will see it and summon help.

### **3. Drawing attention in a public place :**

***In a public place an abducted child should :***

- a. Go behind any counter where there is an employee;
- b. Grab the clerk around the leg and not let go;
- c. Tell the clerk they have been kidnapped;
- d. Keep repeating loudly 'Help me, I've been kidnapped, my name is....'



***In a public place if the child can't go behind a counter, they should :***

- a. Grab hold of the first person they can, holding them tightly;
- b. Repeatedly tell them loudly 'Help me, I've been kidnapped, my name is...'

***In a public place if the child can't get help, they should :***

- a. Run through the place pulling and flinging merchandise off the shelves;
- b. Keep knocking things off the shelves till someone restrains them;
- c. Keep knocking things off the shelves till abductor lets them go.
- d. Keep repeating loudly 'Help me, I've been kidnapped, my name is....'

***In a restaurant the child can :***

- a. Grab the waitress as she comes to the table;
- b. Grab onto items in restaurant (chair, table, cash register) yelling 'Help me, I've been kidnapped, my name is...'



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### ***At a gas station with service, the abducted child can :***

- a. Try to get into someone else's car;
- b. Grab the service attendant as they come to the car;
- c. When abductor goes to pay for the gas, child can honk the horn or try getting out of the car as mentioned previously in "How to escape from a car."

### ***On the street, if child manages to get away from abductor, they should :***

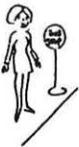
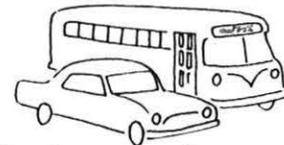
- a. Run into and against the direction of pedestrians. The crowd acts as a natural obstacle for the abductor giving chase. The child can also move more easily and faster than most abductors in this environment.
- b. If there is no crowd, running in the opposite direction of traffic can be effective, especially at night. The lights from the cars make it harder for the pursuer to see. In the daytime, running against traffic allows the faces of the abductor and child to be seen by the drivers.

### ***Fire alarms :***

A child should know that it's okay to use a fire alarm switch to summon help during an abduction. A child should know how to: (a) Trip a fire alarm. (b) Where fire alarms are located in buildings, malls and on the street. (c) Trip the alarm and find a hiding place near the alarm. (d) Stay in hiding place after pulling the alarm, till police/firefighters show up.

### ***Busses :***

While fleeing in public, getting on a bus is an excellent route of escape. A child should know: (a) How to board a bus and summon help. (b) How to recognize bus stops. (c) How to find hiding places near a bus stop, then wait there for the bus and run onto it when it comes and stops, seeking assistance.



### ***Car alarms :***

Car alarms are a great tool for drawing attention. Most car alarms can be set off by pulling on the door handle or bouncing against the car. Once the alarm is activated, the child should hide somewhere near the activated car and wait for help to arrive. Other options available to the child are sliding under the parked car (ever try to get a child out from under a bed?) making sure not to align themselves with the car tires .