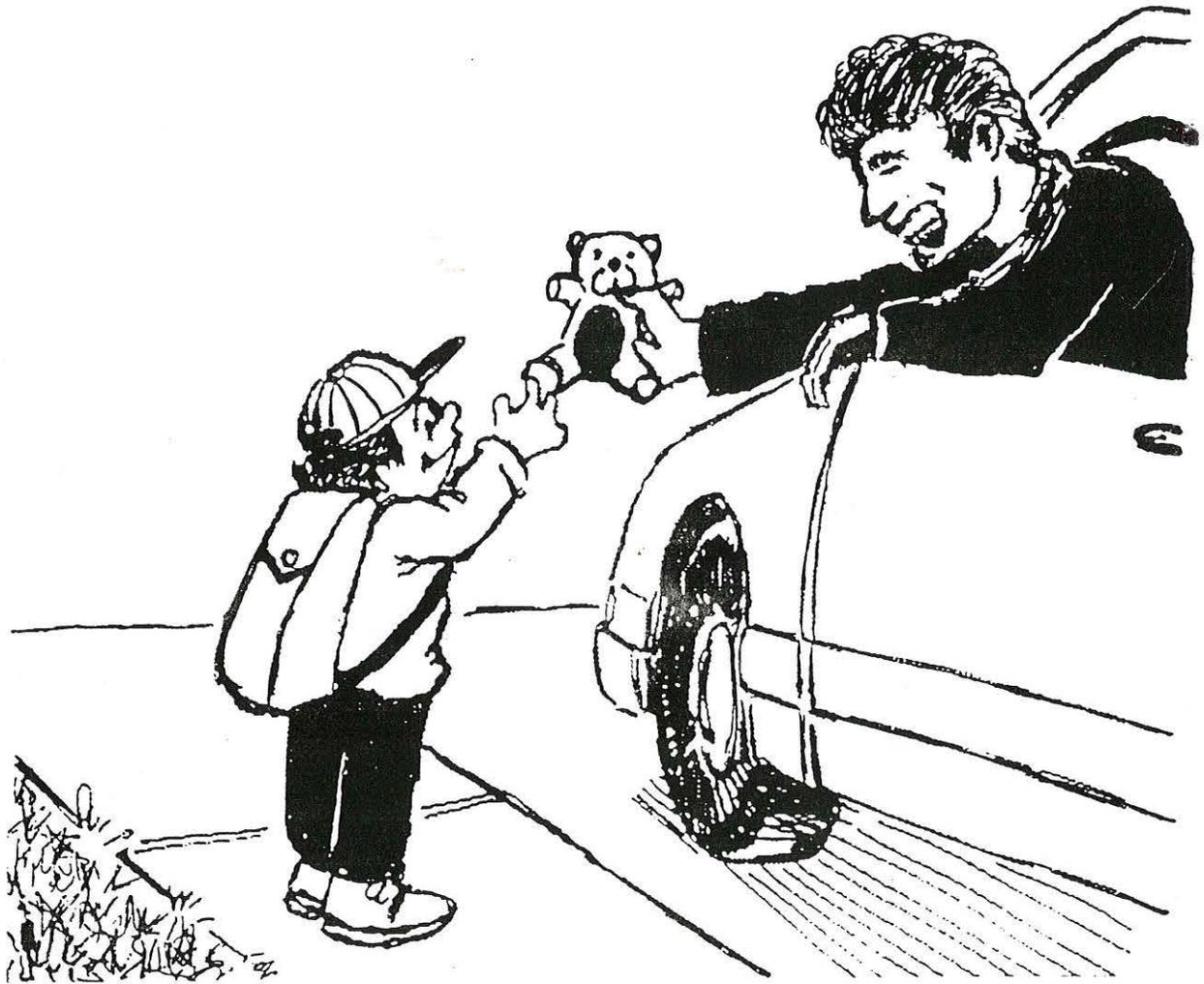


# ***STREET SAFE KIDS***

*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**

## **24. IF ABDUCTED, KNOW HOW TO EFFECTIVELY HIDE**

Keep in mind that if a child is able to get away from an abductor, the abductor is most likely going to look for that child with the same intensity that you or I would as a parent. If you've ever lost a child, then you know how quickly panic sets in. Most people will begin to search for the child the instant they first realize they are missing.

Once away from the abductor, the child must have a good place to hide. The faster the child finds a place to hide, the better. As the abductor looks for the child, they will most likely move further and further away from where the child is hiding. Some of the hiding places listed here can be used for immediate cover, which the child can abandon for a better one if the abductor wanders away in their search. Once the child finds a good hiding place, they should stay there until it is safe to summon help. If a child escapes from an abductor and is recaptured, they will probably never get another chance at freedom and may never be seen alive again.

Child abductors are demented, twisted monsters in every sense of the word. The criminal plays by a set of rules that law-abiding people don't even know exist. Criminal behavior is bizarre. Logic is not part of the equation. Criminals take things to derive benefits from them. If it's cash they spend it, if it's goods they sell it, if it's a child they abuse it and destroy it, and they waste no time accomplishing this morbid goal.

Child abductors are not afraid of the police. If they were, they would not have taken the child in the first place. It's been known for abductors to enlist the help of store security or even police officers in their search effort to regain the child. At this point the child is in control because they know where they're hiding and the abductor does not. What is crucial is that the child remain in control by a combination of making the right decisions and luck. The child must summon help aggressively and convincingly as mentioned earlier.

If the child does not feel comfortable with summoning help, then they should stay hidden until they do feel comfortable. The longer the child is out of the abductor's grasp, the better the child's chances of rescue. Survival depends on instinct and instinct is developed by practice.

The following ideas were taken from Robert Stuber's book "Missing! Stranger Abduction," Smart Strategies To Keep Your Child Safe, 1996.

## 24. If abducted - Know how to hide

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### *If a child were to need a hiding place, they should know :*

1. To stay out of the open (hidden) as much as possible;
2. Not to stand in the center of an open area;
3. To stay close to walls of buildings and houses;
4. To find the best hiding place possible and stay there till help arrives;
5. It's okay to go to the bathroom in their pants while hiding;
6. How to find food and water while on their own;
7. How to keep warm and dry;
8. To employ extraordinary behavior in extraordinary circumstances.



### *a. Hiding - On the street*

1. In a ditch; up a tree;
2. In a set of bushes; under a bench;
3. In a dark doorway or dark alley;
4. In a crowd of people;
5. Behind a set of stairs; behind a snow bank;
6. In a garbage can or dumpster - pull cover over child when inside;
7. In an unlocked vehicle - get in, lock doors, lie down on the floor;
8. In the back of a truck; under a vehicle - avoid being in the path of the wheels;
9. In a stack of tires at a gas station or car repair shop, etc.;



### *b. Hiding - In a public place*

1. Behind sales counters; under a table; behind floor-length curtains,;
2. Inside racks of hanging clothes; in the stockroom behind boxes;
3. In a restaurant kitchen
4. In the bathroom of the opposite sex of the abductor;
5. Inside display counters (most counters have storage cabinets at the bottom);
6. Inside or behind large appliances (some appliances cannot be opened from inside);
7. Dressing rooms of the opposite sex of the abductor, etc.;

***c. Hiding - In the countryside***

1. In a doghouse; go through a doggie door into a house (beware of dog);
2. In a barn - behind or under hay;
3. Under a house or other structure; under a bridge;
4. In a drainpipe under the roadway or up a bushy tree;
5. Inside over-grown bushes or tall weeds; under piles of leaves;
6. In a hot water heater closet;
7. Hide somewhere close to mailboxes by the roadside in case someone comes along to pick up their mail and can help.

***d. Hiding - in a house***

1. Under the sink; behind large plants;
2. Inside the fireplace (summer); inside a large box;
3. Inside a folded up roll-away bed; inside cupboards;
4. Inside a closet - behind boxes or clothes; Inside a piano;
5. Under couch cushions (laying flat); inside a rolltop desk;
6. Behind a washer or dryer (but not inside); in a stack of laundry;

***Parent/child activity - realistic hide and seek*** : This ancient game loved by all children can be played in order to teach a child not only to hide effectively, but to also stay hidden or evade someone while moving.

***Basic playing rules*** : (a) Child(ren) has 30 seconds to hide. (b) Set boundaries and locations which are 'off limits' (or unsafe) for hiding locations. (c) Select a 'code word' which will signal the end of the game or round. Once the code word is used by the person counting, the child must come out of their hiding place (code word should be used by the person counting only if they give up the search and have not managed to locate the hidden child). (d) The person searching for the child(ren) can say things in order to spook or panic the child(ren) into leaving their hiding place: e.g., "I'm coming for you," "I know where you are hiding, I can see you," "Come out and I won't hurt you," etc. (e) Children should be instructed to remain completely still and silent no matter what the person counting says or does.

***Game variations and objectives*** : Instead of just hiding, the child can try to stay ahead - or go around - the person counting by moving silently from one hiding place to another. The objective is to get back to an agreed-upon location (home base) without being detected.

## 25. TELL & KEEP TELLING TILL SOMEONE HELPS

The longer no one knows about the incident, the more self-esteem is lost and the more suspicious the child is of themselves and others. Children should be instructed to keep telling till someone does something about the incident. Once the child has confided in a trusted adult, they should expect that trusted adult to verbally respond to such news with such things as: "I believe you, it's not your fault." "I'm sorry it happened to you." "I'm glad you told me. I'm going to help you." If the trusted adult doesn't give the proper verbal and emotional response to the troubled child, the child should then seek the help of someone else.

Why is it a molested child does not tell his parents till they have been abused several times? The answer is usually found in the assessment of the child's self-esteem, the parent-child relationship, and the molester-child relationship.



"The hardest 'No' feelings to tell someone about are the ones involving tricks, threats, bribes, lies, secrets or guilt. Sexual assault usually involves one or all of these. Children need to know that no matter how much they think they contributed to their problem, they can still go to an adult they trust for help and not worry about being judged or reprimanded...It is important that we do not give the impression that saying 'No, going and telling' about the abuse is always easy. We do not want to add more guilt to a child's mountain of internal obstacles if they were not able to avoid the abuse and have not disclosed it. We need to acknowledge the struggle of a child who is trying to muster the courage to tell someone...Before a child will talk to someone, they must climb a mountain of overwhelming feelings. Fear of not being believed, fear of losing love, fear of losing an important caretaker, fear of physical threats, fear of abandonment, misguided guilt about causing or deserving the mistreatment, doubts about what will happen, confusion over ambivalent feelings about the abuser...As parents and educators we should convey our compassionate recognition of children who may be trying to take the first steps on the road from being abuse victims to becoming survivors by saying: It can be very difficult to tell a trusted grown-up if 'Not okay touching' has happened to you. And not everyone can say 'No' or avoid being hurt. But it is 'Never your fault.' It may take time to work up the courage, but it is also 'Never too late to tell someone.' " (Kids and Company - Together For Safety, Teacher's Guide).



## 25. Tell and keep telling till someone helps

We build the foundation of lifelong trust and communication with our children by talking about this difficult subject in a calm, nurturing and confident manner. Along with good safety habits, your children need to know they can share with you whatever happens to them - the good, the bad and the ugly things. They may be reluctant to tell you about unusual or high-risk situations with other children or adults such as being followed, bullied, 'taxed,' touched inappropriately or witnessing something suspicious. Part of the problem is that children often feel responsible, embarrassed about their abuse; by revealing their dilemma to their parents they also feel they will be yelled at or punished just like when they screw things up at home.

It is our duty as parents to carefully and appropriately respond to our children's fears. Remind them that one lie generally leads to another lie and telling the truth is more important than making mistakes or being embarrassed. They should understand that it is not their fault and that you will always love them, listen to them and believe them, no matter what or when it happened or what they did.

Make sure your child realizes that they will not be punished for having reported the unfortunate occurrence, but certain corrections will have to be made (like reporting the incident, getting professional help, etc.), so that similar incidents would never occur again to them or other children.

Stress the fact that it is never too late to tell and ask for help if someone is touching them or scaring them and that most threats used on children by assailants are generally hollow. Telling right away or as soon as possible is better than not telling at all.

### ***Details to recall when telling:***

- a. Try to proceed in an organized fashion: determine the time and place of incident.
- b. The offender's sex, race, age, height, weight, hair color and complexion.
- c. Words or phrases used by the offender; dialect, tone of voice, etc.
- d. Any moles, scars, missing teeth, oddly shaped nose or fingers, etc.
- e. Compare the offender to yourself. Is he taller, shorter, heavier, older?
- f. Direction of escape and by what means (type of car, color, plate number, etc.).
- g. Notify police of any physical evidence left behind: weapon, clothes, gifts, etc.



***"Face the situation completely, see what is occurring clearly, and bring to bear fully committed action to deal with the situation rapidly and effectively."***  
(Protecting Children From Danger, Bishop & Thomas)

