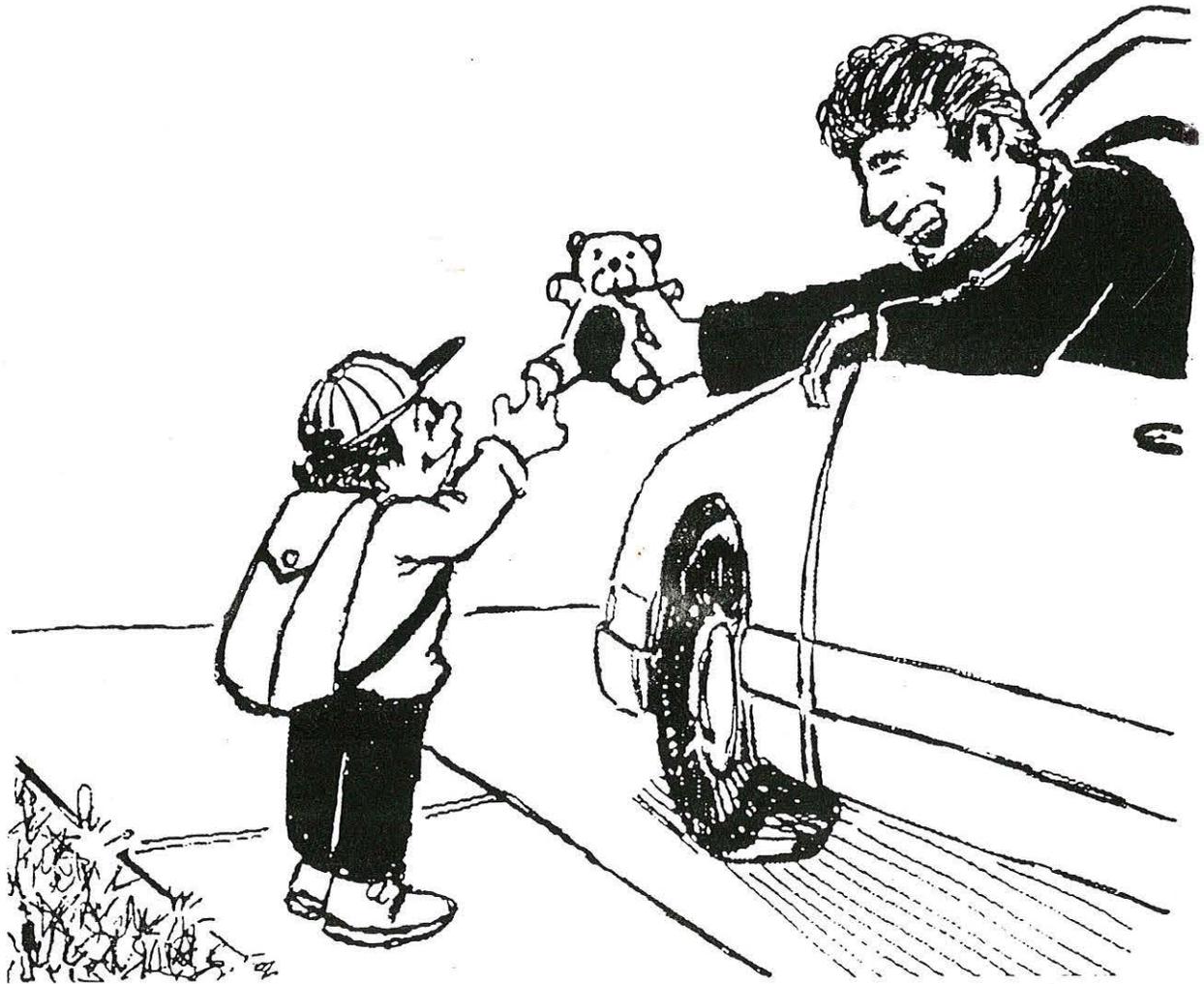


STREET SAFE KIDS

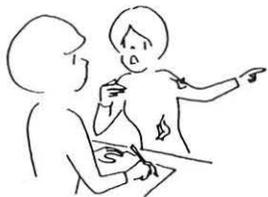
Protecting children from sexual predators – a street-proofing manual



“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



26. REPORT THE INCIDENT TO THE AUTHORITIES

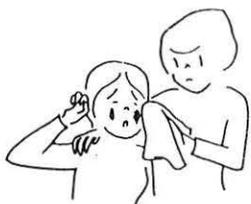
Sexual molestation of children is rarely limited to one incident. Your failure to report an incident involving a child may contribute to the victimization of other children. Not reporting the incident may escalate your child's natural sense of feeling guilty. By telling you, the parent, your child is looking to YOU for protection. Your failure to report the incident to the proper authorities may suggest to the child that you do not believe them, you won't protect them and that such an incident is not significant enough for you to bother about.

The whole family can benefit from the incident by focusing their rage where it belongs, in seeking justice and teaching family members that crime does not pay. By reporting the incident, your child and family can assist the police in whatever steps are necessary to apprehend and punish the offender. It is helpful for the child to know that their family, the police and society are furious at the offender, that the offender has done something terribly wrong, and should be punished. Even though these judicial procedures may take a while, the end result will more than justify the means.

27. IT IS NOT THE CHILD'S FAULT



Never, ever is it the child's fault. Certain incidents might perhaps have been prevented by 'smarter' behavior from the child and by having followed and adhered to all the safety rules given by parents and schools. But absolutely nothing should shift the guilt away from the real guilty party, the mugger or molester. It was not the child who chose to be mugged or molested by the assailant. Children should not feel responsible for any part of the incident, and it is up to the parents and family members to make sure.



"Many adults don't realize that small children have not yet learned that events take place independently of them. They connect pleasant experiences with adults to their own good behavior. Conversely, unpleasant ones are associated in their mind with misbehavior on their part." (How To Raise A Street Smart Child, Hechinger, 1986).

Feelings of being humiliated, overpowered and violated after a mugging or molestation experience are common. The child as well as the entire family is victimized by the incident. Children often blame themselves for what has happened, and therefore, do not want anyone to find out for fear that they might be punished for being bad or for not having listened. The physical and mental scars often remain after the actual encounter.

27. It's not the child's fault

Children often mistakenly blame themselves, assuming part of the guilt. Self-blame makes the victim feel more powerful because they tell themselves they have made so many errors, they deserved to be assaulted. Unfortunately to blame oneself is not a realistic way to feel all that mighty. Parents must help the child victim be angry at the person who did the mugging or molestation and not blame themselves or the child for what happened.

"Kids have less trouble recovering if they know muggers are the bad guys. You don't have to be afraid of them, but you have to watch out for them and identify them. They are like tigers in the streets. You have to know about them...Children, like adults, often need to talk this through as a means of getting help with being angry with the perpetrator. That is the healthiest outcome. Then, they can take action. Being forced to hide the anger spells trouble. Deal with facts, that the other person is a bad apple." (How To Raise A Street Smart Child, Hechinger, 1986).



It is of major importance that as parents we do not mistakenly send out any guilt-producing messages to our children who have been victimized, such as asking "Why were you there at that hour?, or "I told you never to go there!" The important thing to consider is for your child not to feel they have disappointed you (because they did not listen to your advice), or been failures because they were victimized.

"Personal safety education can be an important part of the healing process for abused children. They can learn how to protect themselves, how to trust and act on their inner feelings, how to access help and support, and, most importantly, they can begin to reestablish their belief in themselves as good people deserving of care, love, and respect." (Kids And Company - Together For Safety, Teacher's Guide).

A common, absurd misconception people have is the idea that a severely frightening experience will toughen up the adult or child victim. Dr. Lenore Terr has concluded that frightening experiences will shake up all children in the beginning. Some will bounce back quickly while others will take a little longer to get themselves together. Some may become so seriously distressed and anxious they need special help.

"Parents must keep in mind that children at risk, those who have faced bad situations, will benefit most from help and understanding. Never forget that when a child is a victim, it is up to you the parent to make sure the experience will do no lasting harm." (How To Raise, Hechinger, 1986).

27. It's not the child's fault

If you suspect your child has been molested :



1. Do not blame or punish your child for the actions of others - it was not your child's fault.
2. Do not create the impression that he or she has done something 'bad.'
3. Provide assurance of your support, love and concern. Recognize and support your child's feelings. Assure them that you will protect them from any further abuse.
4. Take time to listen. Do not dismiss what your child tells you as exaggeration or a figment of the imagination. Children seldom lie about sexual abuse.
5. Take positive steps when necessary. If more than one month goes by and your child is still experiencing any of the following, consult a professional:
 - a. Disturbances in sleep patterns with recurring nightmares, bed-wetting etc.
 - b. Change in eating habits, particularly loss of appetite.
 - c. Increase of physical complaints.
 - d. Difficulties in school, either academic or behavioral.
 - e. Reluctance to go outdoors.
 - f. Marked persistent changes in behaviors.



Does your child know...

1. *Their full name and those of their parents or guardian?*
2. *Their age and date of birth?*
3. *Their home phone number (including area code) and their full address?*
4. *The work number of both parents?*
5. *What a "Block Parent" sign looks like and what its purpose is?*
6. *How to use a public phone, how to make collect & long distance calls?*
7. *The "kids help" phone number: 1-800-668-6868 & the emergency numbers "9-1-1" or "0" ?*



28. LISTEN AND COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR CHILD

In spite of all your efforts in making sure that your children keep "No secrets, ever" and tell you about any frightening or unsettling experiences, they still might not do so. As a parent, you must be aware and alert to particular behaviors when assessing for sexual abuse, molestation, or an incestuous relationship (these behaviors differ greatly according to the age of each child). Professional help is available to assist you in guiding your child through this process. There are trained psychologists, social workers and child safety experts who deal with child, teen and adult sexual assault victims. If you suspect that your child or any other child is being or has been abused, you must by law call the law enforcement agencies in your area or the Youth protection officials at once: Tel.: ☎ (514) 527-7211.

If the child confides in you, let your child know that you are glad that they could tell you about the incident, and that you want to do all that you can to help. All experts insist that the earlier you start the healing process with your child the better it is. And, just as important, is your immediate reaction to the news. Keep your own emotions out of the child's way. You may not be able to conceal your own negative feelings of anger and outrage, but make sure that: (a) Those feelings don't get in the way of concentrating on helping your child (it was the child who had the bad experience); (b) Your child does not misunderstand at whom your anger is directed.

"If parents inadvertently give the impression that their rage is directed towards the child, the child can even be made to feel like the perpetrator. If parents communicate their own feelings of guilt, a child may feel insecure and confused." (*How To Raise A Street Smart Child*, Hechinger, '86).

Parents tend to make two common mistakes which generally make matters worse after their child has been mugged or sexually abused: (a) They overreact and get hysterical when they hear about the incident. By being anxious and overreacting to the situation, you are teaching children to be frightened, which is the opposite of what you want to do in the first place. That's why it is so important to think through your own feelings and keep them under control. (b) The second mistake parents tend to make is to go to the opposite extreme - they dismiss the incident completely, they withdraw and abdicate, telling themselves and their children - "There is nothing I can do about this," or "I just cannot deal with this right now." Such a defeatist reaction will not be helpful to your child and will make them feel abandoned just at a time when you are needed most. Some parents try coping with the event by denying their strong feelings of anger and irrational guilt for not having been able to protect their children.

28. Listen and communicate with your child

Shame and humiliation about an unsettling incident are hard to discuss. On the other hand, it can also be hard to listen, but it will be worth your while. Listen to your child, once you feel ready to communicate without letting your own rage and guilt interfere. Encourage talk about the incident, but without pressure. Let them tell you in their own words, or with drawings or dolls (if it makes things easier), exactly what happened. Avoid suggesting words or modifying what they are saying. Your ideas mixed in with their actual experience might confuse the truth. Your main goal is to help make your child's negative feelings easier to deal with and handle by sharing them (a big heavy sword is hard to carry alone). Avoid playing Detective Colombo or Mrs. Mind reader. Keep focused - respond to the child's feelings. Reassure your child that they are now safe and that the frightening experience will not happen again. Let your child know that you are glad that they told you about the incident, and that they are surrounded by people who love and understand them and will do everything in their power to help put an end to this.

Not talking about the incident, feeling humiliated, inadequate and ashamed to report and discuss the event is damaging for the child. It is very unlikely that a child will forget what happened to them by simply not talking about it. Parents must make a special effort to support the child and help them come to terms with their feelings (whether they be feeling anger, fear, sadness or anxiety). Talking about the bad experience with you, the parent, will help them work out their anxieties, assimilate the experience a little better and not have it take hold of their lives. If your child chooses not to talk openly about the abuse with you (bottle up the fear and anger), they may instead discuss the event with friends, whose limited experience might not be very helpful and indeed lead them up the wrong path.

Once the child has confided in you, Dr. Sirgay Sanger suggests that you "move cautiously, taking one step at a time. Begin in a conversational tone. Do not rush in with adult sympathy until you find out what aspects bothered the child most. Reassure your child, affirm that it was not the child's fault. Use such phrases as: "You did everything you could" or "there were three of them and only one of you," or "I would of done the same thing in your shoes," this gives the child the feeling that you really understand and sympathize." (*How To Raise*, Hechinger, 1986).

Avoid pointless after-the-fact remarks and criticisms like: "How did you let yourself get into a mess like that?" "...If only..." or "I told you a million times not to..." and "Why didn't you do such-and-such a thing?" This kind of thinking is futile and will not alleviate the distress the child is feeling. These harmful comments may jeopardize the relationship of trust you are trying to build. Your train of thought should guide your child to being angry at the mugger or molester only, not at themselves.

"Dr. Richard Rabkin suggests that during your comforting talks, you let the child go over all the details of what happened at his or her pace. Give the child as much time as needed to feel whatever he or she did was all right. The youngster will thus gain relief by getting the negative feelings into the open." (*How To Raise A Street Smart Child*, Hechinger, '86).

A child should be made aware that they can talk about the incident as many times as they like or feel necessary in order to get all the facts. Rarely do the most troubling details of the encounter surface during the first account on the incident. Be prepared for many tears and even a good cry, depending on the child's age and the severity of the incident.

Parent/child activities that stimulate conversation and personal safety skills

- a. ***A drive in the family car*** can often stimulate conversation between you and your child. It encourages candid conversation, allows for complete privacy and your child won't feel intimidated by a face-to-face dialogue, since you are sitting side-by-side chit-chatting as you go.
- b. ***Long walks*** have a tendency to stimulate honest conversation between both parties. Keep your comments non-judgmental, probe gently for details moving the story along.
- c. ***Communication game:*** In this game parent and child must disclose to the other something that is bothering them or something they fear ; i.e., a problem that is currently on their mind, a bullying experience, etc.
 - ➔ Allow your child to talk about anything, even if it might seem silly, hilarious or at times disturbing to you. Encourage honesty. If you encounter some resistance, you might want to tell a tale of your own; things that frightened or bother you when you were that age.
 - ➔ Discuss the pros and cons of the situation and try to work out some reasonable solutions or alternatives. If possible, write down some of the possible solutions and actions that will eventually solve the problem.
 - ➔ Parent should try to keep away from topics that could have some bearing on the child's sense of security: financial concerns, relationship with divorced father, etc.
 - ➔ Occasionally focus your concerns on the child: "My biggest worry is you. You don't seem to be your usual self the last few days, you know I love you and if there's anything bothering you, we can talk about it."
 - ➔ Have a follow-up discussion a few weeks later to see whether the proposed solutions have had any effect.

28. Listen and communicate with your child

d. The 'What-if...?' role-playing game : Role-playing is a fun and easy way for parent's to teach their children not only personal safety skills but also a variety of ways to confidently eliminate danger when faced with a challenging situation. Use the 'What-if...?' role-playing suggestions presented to you on page 109 and 110 of this manual or make it a family project to come up with a variety of scenarios you can use in the game that are particular to your family setting.

Some of the benefits of playing the 'What if...?' role-playing game :

- i. It will help your child develop a healthy awareness, thinking through possible alternatives and reasoning for themselves when faced with a questionable situation;
- ii. It will encourage your child to use problem solving skills that fortify their sense of autonomy, giving them confidence in their ability to take care of themselves.
- iii. It will help your child realize that they are responsible for their own safety;
- iv. It will help your child live each situation, thinking independently rather than having a list of do's and don'ts to remember;
- v. It will help your child realize that they must trust their own feelings in order to make safe decisions when a caring adult is not present to guide them;
- vi. It will help your child familiarize themselves with the most appropriate assertive responses and the sometimes needed vocabulary to handle the challenging situations they may face;
- vii. It will reveal your child's feelings, providing relief and assurance for both you and them;
- viii. It will help the parent have some insight into fears their child may find hard to explain directly;
- ix. It will help the parent identify and see what their child already knows and what needs to be learned;
- x. It will help you teach your child the most appropriate solution(s) for the situation - be it verbal, passive or physical resistance;
- xi. With the adult's help the child can develop safety skills, attitudes, and self-protective habits.

28. Listen and communicate with your child

Before you start playing the 'What-if...?' role-playing game :

- i. Remind your child to never play role-playing games with people they do not know.
- ii. Try playing the game while driving the car, at the dinner table, while taking a walk. Consider playing the game in natural settings such as parks, malls, etc.
- iii. With younger children, your role-playing directions and explanations should be as simple and as clear as possible with several examples to back up the ideas presented.
- iv. Make the experience fun, age-appropriate and non-fearful. The intent is not to frighten the child, but to help them.
- v. Video taping the role-playing exchanges can be an excellent teaching tool that will help you in getting your personal safety message(s) across to your child, while simultaneously pointing out certain strengths and weaknesses both of you need to work on.

Beginning the 'What-if...?' role-playing game :

- i. Begin role-playing by asking your child hypothetical situations (unsafe or potentially threatening ones), that you wish to discuss with them. Include situations in which the child may know the person, but not very well.
- ii. Each participant role-plays each part of a script, then switches roles (good guy/bad guy). Your child plays the good guy twice: once when you present the scenario and a second time after they have seen you role-play the good guy.
- iii. By having the child assume both roles they get to (1) better understand the motives of the lure, abduction or nature of the danger; (2) see and hear mom or dad's role-playing suggestions. Opening a new can of worms for discussion and personal safety proposals.

Possible responses from your child to the 'What-if' role-playing game :

- i. Wait for their responses. Don't be tempted to answer for them. Give them time to respond.
- ii. Encourage your child to come up with more than one answer to the hypothetical situation presented. Together identify the most appropriate street safe solution(s) for the situation.

28. Listen and communicate with your child

- iii. Don't be alarmed if the child gives you wrong answers at first. Best a wrong answer at home than on the street. Try to pinpoint the gaps in their personal safety logic. When you switch roles, role-play the appropriate responses for them to analyze and visualize the message.
- iv. Play the game(s) to its natural conclusion(s). Allowing both of you to look at the potential problem, solution(s) and alternatives from a variety of angles.

Possible discussion/questions between parent and child:

- i. Praise your child when they role-play in a safety conscious way. If they are totally out in left field, gently guide them to the correct understanding and safest solution (verbally or better yet, by you role-playing when switching roles).
- ii. Answer your child's questions with non-judgmental replies and open-ended questions in order to enhance their self-esteem.
- iii. Talk about their role-playing reactions (verbal, physical and passive responses). Point out whether they would have been effective or ineffective in their resistance measures. Could they have created a means of escape?
- iv. When you switch roles, make sure you demonstrate the proper behaviors you wish to have your child follow.
- v. If you are video-taping the sessions: let your child view how they responded, then show them how you responded after having switched roles. Finally, view their improved response after having worked together to come up with street safe ways to handle the confrontational situation.
- vi. Together discuss how the action they or you suggested would have stopped an attack, attracted attention or allowed them to get away.
- vii. If the child did not use any verbal resistance, discuss why forceful verbal ways of saying 'No!', attracting attention to the situation by screaming, causing a commotion, dropping to the floor, were not used.
- viii. Remind your child that cutting the dialogue, keeping their distance, following their intuition, yelling - causing a commotion - and running away should be their initial reactive responses. Staying and using physical self-defense techniques, should be their last resort.
- ix. Plan to occasionally repeat the role-playing exchanges since children need time to absorb and understand the newly discovered information. Undoubtedly new questions will surface due to the role-playing exchanges.

'What-if' role-playing suggestions to get you started :

1. *What-if...we are separated in a mall, at the movies, at a parade, etc.?*
2. *What-if...there is an emergency and you have no money to make the call?*
3. *What-if...a person offered you candy or suggests to leave the playground?*
4. *What-if...a person wanted you to get into their car or asks you to come over?*
5. *What-if...a person or gang tried to pull you into their car?*
6. *What-if...someone you didn't know ask you your name and phone number?*
7. *What-if...someone approaches you and offers you a gift for a chance to take your picture?*
8. *What-if...you think you are being followed?*
9. *What-if...someone approaches you and says that your mom got into a terrible accident and asked them to pick you up and bring you to the hospital?*
10. *What-if...someone identifies them self as being the undercover security agent working for the shopping center. They place you under arrest for shoplifting and orders you to accompany them?*
11. *What-if...a family friend started fussing with your clothing?*
12. *What-if...a family friend tried to touch your private parts?*
13. *What-if...a family friend offers you a ride home after soccer practice?*
14. *What-if...a new neighbor asks you to come in and help them move some boxes?*
15. *What-if...your friends wanted to play with matches?*
16. *What-if...a classmate asks you to help him find his dog that ran into the wooded area?*
17. *What-if...your parents are supposed to pick you up but they are awfully late?*
18. *What-if...your hockey coach asks you to stay after practice because he needs your help with a few things?*
19. *What-if...your home alone, the phone rings. A voice asks if your mother is home. You do not recognize the voice. What would you say and do?*
20. *What-if...you are home alone and look out the window. You see a man or woman trying to break into a neighbor's back door. What would you do?*
21. *What-if...you are home alone. A man or a woman with a uniform comes to the door and says they want to read the meter. What would you say or do?*

28. Listen and communicate with your child

22. *What-if...you are home alone and your home is for sale. Someone knocks requesting to visit the house?*
23. *What-if...you are home alone and someone knocks at the door requesting assistance (needs to use the phone) because their car broke down?*
24. *What-if...you are home alone and suddenly you hear someone trying to break into your home. What would you say or do?*
25. *What-if...you are walking home with your friends. You observe a persons car approaching another group of children. What would you say or do?*
26. *What-if...you are trick or treating with a friend and a person invites you into their home to show you some cool and scary masks?*
27. *What-if...you get home and the front door is ajar - no one is supposed to be home?*
28. *What-if...a bully shoved you off the steps of a school bus?*
29. *What-if...a bully hit you with a stick or punched you in the stomach?*
30. *What-if...your date forced you to have sex?*
31. *What-if...a bully said to you "Give me your money or I'll punch your lights out?"*
32. *What-if...an armed assailant ordered you to get into his car?*
33. *What-if...you were confronted by a gang? What would you say or do?*
34. *What-if...your best friend asked you to join this local gang?*
35. *What-if...your best friend asked you to try a cigarette or some drugs?*



Mr. Manoli offers specialized 'hands-on' courses and workshops

 (514) 328-4683 - We welcome all inquiries

A. Looking for a great speaker on personal safety or child kidnap prevention?

Mr. Manoli is available for groups, clubs, schools, corporate & staff-development seminars, etc.

B. Is your child being bullied or picked on continuously by others?

Mr. Manoli offers 'hands-on' anti-bullying & assertiveness training for children & teens.

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Mr. Manoli offers at your workplace 'hands-on' street safe workshops for adults, teens & children.

D. One-on-one assertiveness & self-defense training is available for:

Rape & assault survivors; Blind & handicapped individuals; People lacking in personal confidence.

E. Programs are available during lunch time, after school or evenings:

Street Safe Kids : Gr. 1-6; Assault Prev. for Women & Teens; Children's Karate; Babysitting courses

