

Teaching Your Child Stranger Awareness

Every year, children are abducted, exploited, or even murdered by strangers. All children should know how to respond to potentially threatening situations involving strangers. Most parents tell their children, "Don't talk to strangers," but this warning is not enough - children often don't understand that strangers don't always look dangerous. They may act friendly and "hang around" the neighborhood or school until they become a familiar and seemingly non-threatening part of the scene.

Children who are on the lookout for certain kinds of situations or actions and know how to react to them, are safer than those who are merely cautious about "strangers." A number of basic safety rules will increase kids' awareness and lessen their chances of being harmed. Share these rules with your child and encourage other parents to learn these rules and teach them to their children.

If a child gets separated from a parent(s) in a public place, the child should go immediately to a checkout counter or the security office and tell the person in charge that they need help finding their parent(s).

A child should never get into a car or go anywhere with any person without their parents permission.

If someone follows a child on foot or in a car, the child should avoid that person and quickly go to a crowded, well-lighted place where there are people who can help them.

A child should never go anywhere with a stranger. They should not respond to anyone they don't know and be aware of ploys such as asking for directions or help in looking for a "lost dog", or that their mother or father is in trouble and asked the stranger to pick them up. The child should quickly go to a crowded, well-lit place where there are people who can help them.

If someone tries to take a child somewhere, the child should get away if possible and should start yelling, "This person is trying to take me away!" or "This person is not my [father or mother]!"

A child should always use the "buddy system" when going somewhere outside the home, never go alone.

A child should always ask for permission to leave the yard, play area or to go to someone else's house. They should tell their parents where they will be and when they will be back. They should be back at the expected time or call to let them know if they will be late.

No adult should ask a child to keep a "special secret" about anything that makes the child uncomfortable. If this happens, the child should tell her parents or an adult she trusts.

If someone wants to take a picture of the child they don't know well, the child should say no and tell his parents or another trusted adult.

No one except a doctor should touch a child in the places covered by their bathing suit, nor should they touch anyone else in those areas. The child should understand that those parts of their body are private, and if anyone tries to touch them, they should tell her parents or a trusted adult.

Be sensitive to changes in your child's behavior. Keep the lines of communication open so you can ask your child what's going on.

Be alert to a teenager or adult who is paying an unusual amount of attention to your child or giving them inappropriate or expensive gifts.

Remember what your child is wearing each time your child leaves the house.

Do not permit your child to wear any clothing that has your child's name visible to others.
Personalization's can help a kidnapper gain your child's trust.

Use your eyes, ears and intuition to help you protect your children.

Children are strong, and they have the right to say no to someone who tries to take them somewhere against their will or who touches them or makes them feel uncomfortable. They should tell their parents or a trusted adult.

Tricks commonly used by strangers to lure children.

1. Asking for help. Adults should ask other adults for help; they should not ask children. Teach your child to stand at arm's reach, say no and run away immediately.
2. Offering gifts. Children should be instructed to stay out of reach and never accept items from a stranger.
3. Saying there is an emergency and that the child's parents have sent them. In a real emergency, someone the child knows should be given that task. Have a secret family code word.
4. Getting your child to let them in the house. Only an adult should open a door to a stranger. If there are no adults present, the child should say that Mom or Dad is busy try again later. A kid should never admit to a stranger that they are home alone.
5. Getting a child to admit over the telephone that they are home alone. "Is your mother or father home?"
The child should say that Mom or Dad are busy, offer to take a message and hang up.
6. Telling a child that his parents don't love them anymore. No matter what happens, your child should know he or she is loved - always.