

Lesson 2: Stranger Safety

Parent/Guardian Instructions:

- Review the stranger safety materials with your child (ren).
- Review and practice "What Every Child Should Know".
- Review and practice the stranger guidelines.

Lesson Discussion:

This year thousands of children will learn the reality of stranger abduction first hand. Some abduction will result in molestation, or even death. However some children are released while others will be kept in captivity. The reality is there are tens of thousands of known abductors and molesters out there. There are about 1.8 million missing children in the United States, and 20,000 to 30,000 will not see their parent/guardians again.

The only chance a child has against them is your willingness as a parent/guardian to sit down and talk about it. Obviously, this isn't an easy subject. But if you approach it as safety rules, like a fire drill, it doesn't have to be frightening. Please don't leave your children out there unprotected. Talk to them.

WHAT EVERY CHILD SHOULD KNOW

First, it's important to reassure your child (ren) that child abduction is rare and most people are good and care for children. However, there are certain situations they should be prepared to deal with if they arise.

Strangers have been the focus of so much of our concern for our child's (ren) safety that most kids have a pretty distorted sense of whom and what strangers are. What has been said about strangers makes sense to adults, but doesn't usually make sense to kids.

Children believe that the world is divided into two types of people: good guys and bad guys. We've traditionally taught them that the ones they need to worry about and watch out for are the bad guys. (Don't take candy from strangers; beware of strangers.)

Teaching children to be afraid of strangers not only doesn't work well, it is frightening. When we say things like, "Don't talk to strangers or get in their car because they might take you away and we'd never see you again." we scare children without protecting them. Instead of using scare tactics we need to teach children defense mechanism and teach them what they should know in dealing with strangers. Below is a question and answer lesson that parent/guardians should go through with their child (ren):

What if an adult wants you to do something you don't want to do?

First, every child should know that he or she has a right to say "No!" We have a tendency to tell children to obey adults. This makes them vulnerable to every adult. There are only certain adults they should obey. And you should tell them who they are. Teach your child (ren) to protect their personal space from unwanted intrusion.

What if an adult asks you to keep a secret from your mother or your father?

No adult should ask a child to keep a secret from their parent/guardians. If an adult, even someone they trust like a babysitter or a relative, ever tells them to keep a secret, they should tell you immediately. Molesters depend on the fact that a child will keep their secret.

What is a stranger?

Children should know that a stranger is any adult they don't know well. That doesn't mean they're bad. It just means they haven't earned your trust yet. Even someone they see every day, like a neighbor, is a stranger if they don't know them well.

What if a stranger wants you to come to his car or house?

If a stranger pulls over and asks for help or wants to show you something in his car, don't go to the car. Stand back and be ready to run. You should explain that while it's OK for a child to ask a grownup for help, grownups shouldn't ask children for help. They should be asking other grownups. Abductors will use many lures to draw children to them:

- They ask for help, like directions for finding a pet.
- They seduce children with gifts, candy, money or jobs.
- They make threats.
- They pretend to be authority figures, like police and clergy.
- They say it's an emergency. "Your parent/guardians are hurt. I'll take you to the hospital."

What do you do if a stranger says they have come to pick you up?

For the safety of your child, you should have a secret code word that just the family members know. If you ever send someone to pick up your child, give them the code word. Your child should not go near the car unless the stranger knows the secret word.

What do you do if you think that someone is following you?

Don't be alone. Immediately run to a friend's house or the nearest store and tell them.

What if a stranger ever threatens you or tries to grab you?

Shout "HELP" and "I don't know you" and "call 9-1-1" and get away fast. Make a big scene so people will come. Carry and use a personal attack alarm. Most abductors and molesters will run away if their victim fights and attracts attention with noise.

Can you dial your full phone number? What's your full name and address?

Make sure your child knows their full name, phone number and address, including state. Make a game of teaching them to call home long distance. Or if they're too young, teach them to dial 9-1-1 for help. Tell them if they are abducted, a phone call home or to 9-1-1 can bring them home.

What if you're home alone and someone calls for your mother or father?

A child should never tell anyone they're home alone. Just tell them "My parent/guardians can't come to the phone right now. I'll take a message." And never open the door to any stranger.

The Stranger Guidelines

Define a stranger.

A stranger is anyone you don't know. You can't tell the good guys from the bad guys

Who is responsible for keeping yourself safe when you're by yourself?

YOU

If you are alone and a stranger comes up to you. What should you do if you get a weird or funny feeling in your stomach?

Instinct is nature's way of talking to you. Listen to your inner voice. Be prepared to run and tell a trusted adult or call 9-1-1

What are the five rules you should always follow when you're not with an adult who is taking care of you?

- **Stay an arms reach plus away from strangers. Stand up, back up and run to someone who can help you if you feel afraid.**
- **Don't talk to strangers.**
- **Don't take anything from strangers**
- **Never accept a ride from a stranger.**
- **Don't go anywhere with someone you don't know.**

Protecting children from abuse and abduction by strangers is a partnership between you and your child (ren). If you teach your child (ren) about strangers as positively and clearly as you teach them to cross the street, they will not only have a healthier attitude about the world, they will be safer.

Parent/Guardian and Child (ren) Activity:

- Roll play with your child (ren) "What every child should know".
- Roll play the stranger guidelines
- Complete the stranger activity game at the end of this lesson.