

Teaching Stranger Danger

Stranger Danger and your child

Teaching stranger danger to our kids has become a fact of life, and an important element of child safety in, and out of our homes.

Telling our kids to not talk to strangers is simply not enough anymore, and it's not realistic.

We need to teach our children the basic rules of safety when they are out in the world without us.

It is also important that they understand how to interact with strangers.

Telling them not to talk to strangers is going to instill fear in them, and they will lose trust in the adults in the world.

This is not our goal, what we want is to teach our child both the good and the bad ways to effectively interact with strangers so that they can protect themselves, and stay safe.

Dr. Phil says that children as young as the age of 3 are targets for predators.

It only takes seconds for a child of any age to become a victim of a child predator.

We may think our child at that age is too young to practice safety practices, but there are things we can do together that will maximize our child's safety.

Stranger Danger Tips for Parents and Children

Here are some tips that you as a parent can work on with your child to protect them from stranger danger:

- Teaching stranger danger without frightening our children can be a task.
- We don't want them to feel the world they live in, is dangerous and that everyone is out to get them.
- Your child needs to feel safe in this world.
- Explain to your children that strangers look like anyone else. Like your neighbor, like the man at the post office.
- Not all strangers are bad, but even the strangers that are mean won't look like monsters. That's why we

need to be careful with EVERYONE.

- Tell your child to trust their gut. Children are much more intuitive than adults. Tell your children that if they get a bad feeling, to walk away.
- Use code words with your child. Have a word that only the two of you know for emergencies.
- Set up another code word so that anyone that is permitted to take your child or pick them up has to use the code word so that your child knows it's okay.
- If your child walks home on their own from school, make sure they do it in pairs or groups. Never allow your child to walk home alone.
 - Also make sure that your child always takes the same path or route home.
 - Tell them they can not change their route or plans without calling to notify you first.
 - Our children need to know what

acceptable behavior is and what is over the line.

- When they are interacting with strangers for example, they can take a lollipop if the stranger knows the code word.
 - Even young children however do not understand about touching safety, and these are the children predators' target.
 - Teach your child that they have private areas that no one is allowed to touch or see.
 - Your child should also know that if this line gets crossed, it is NOT a secret. Parents need to know immediately.
 - Give your children tools such as whistles and cell phones if they are old enough.
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- These should be stored in a location that is easy to grab when needed.
 - Your child should blow the whistle if they are uncertain about something.
 - Your child should also know exactly

how to reach in you in case of emergency.

- Animals and candy are two of the most common lure tactics predators use.
 - Tell your children not to talk to strangers with either of these things unless the stranger knows the code word.
- (Code words are excellent tactics when teaching stranger danger!)**
- Do not keep your child's name printed on anything visible to strangers.
 - Their clothing, jackets, backpack, shoes, hats, anything should not have their name on it.
 - If a predator sees a child's name and uses it, the child will instinctively trust them.
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- Your children should always tell you where they are, and when they will return.
 - If they change their plans, they need to let you know.

This should be a fundamental house rule.

- Tell your children if they get lost, to not go anywhere. They will have a better chance of being found if they don't wander any further.
- Here is where a cell phone or whistle will come in handy.
- Role Play with your child so they get a good feel for what is and isn't safe behavior.