

What Adults Need to Know About Personal Safety for Children

Kidpower is an educational charitable organization that, since 1989, has brought "People Safety" education to over 1.2 million children, teenagers, and adults, including those with special needs, from many different cultures - close to home and around the world. For publications; free articles, podcasts and e-newsletter; and information about our services and locations, please visit www.kidpower.org.

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1. Personal safety means keeping your feelings and body safe if people act thoughtless, mean, scary, or dangerous. Personal safety means being in charge of yourself so that you act safely towards others.
2. Violence against young people is a leading health issue of our time. A new study about violence against children was just released by the U.S. Department of Justice. According to the study director and director of the University of New Hampshire Crimes Against Children Research Center, David Finkelhor, Pd.D., "Children experience far more violence, abuse and crime than do adults. If life were this dangerous for ordinary grown-ups, we'd never tolerate it." The study found that over 60% of the children surveyed were exposed either directly or indirectly to some form of violence in the last year.
3. Most of the people who harm children are **not** strangers. According to the National Victims Center, 95% of sexual abuse happens with people children know. Of these, one third are family members – stepparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, siblings, grandparents and parents. Two thirds are other people known to the child – neighbors, youth group leaders, teachers, other children, religious leaders and friends. Experts estimate that one in three girls and one in four boys will be sexually abused before they are eighteen years old.
4. Molesters will often spend up to a year cultivating a trusting relationship with a family, a school, a religious community, or a group of friends before they make their first move. They will often start by systematically creating an emotional connection with a child, pushing the child's boundaries and ensuring that the child won't tell before they do anything that is sexual. This means that children who have skills for setting boundaries and getting help are less likely to be targeted by a molester.
5. Federal agencies estimate that there are 100,000 attempted abductions by strangers each year in the United States. About 2,000 children a year are kidnapped by strangers. Although this is important for adults to know, it is not healthy for children to believe that the world is full of dangerous people called

“strangers.” Instead adults can tell children that most people are good but, if we do not know them well, there are safety rules to follow.

6. One out of seven school children have either been victimized by bullying or have bullied others. Most children have witnessed bullying. Bullying is harmful. Adults are responsible for noticing all forms of bullying and for taking action to make it against the rules.

7. Just telling children about the bad things that might happen makes them anxious. Coaching children so they can be successful in actually practicing skills helps them to become more confident and capable.

8. Young children are very literal, and we need to be sure that they understand what we mean. Telling children, “Never talk to a stranger” is untrue because we ask them to greet people they see as strangers all the time. Telling children, “Never let anyone touch your private areas” is also untrue because it is normal for adults to pat children, pick them up, and help them stay clean and healthy. This is why Kidpower focuses on using language that is clear, truthful, consistent, and positive.

9. Adults need to provide ongoing supervision to ensure the safety of the children in their lives and to keep **listening** to children. However, it is also important that children learn how to protect themselves by knowing their safety rules and following their safety plans. Most kidnappings can be prevented if children are able to be aware, move away from someone they don't know, and check first with their adult. Most sexual abuse and most bullying can be prevented if children can set personal boundaries and be ask for help. Most assaults can be stopped if children yell and run to safety when they are scared.

10. Kidpower brings self protection and confidence to people of all ages and abilities. Workshops can prepare adults to help children learn how to use their own power to stay safe. For more information, call 1-800-467-6997. For free articles and e-newsletter, visit the web page at www.kidpower.org