

Homework For Parents, Teachers, And Other Caring Adults

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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Learn More About Kidpower

Kidpower Teenpower Fullpower International, commonly called Kidpower, is an educational charitable organization established in 1989 to bring self-protection and confidence to people of all ages, abilities, and walks of life. Our vision is to work together to create cultures of caring, respect, and safety for all. Kidpower services have reached over a million children, teenagers, and adults in the United States and many other countries. Law enforcement experts, educators, and mental health specialists recommend our programs for being positive, practical, and effective.

Kidpower's basic principle is that each person's safety and self-esteem are more important than **anyone's** embarrassment, inconvenience, or offense. The skills we teach prepare our students to protect themselves from most bullying, molestation, assault and abduction. Knowing these skills increases most students' belief in themselves as being powerful, competent and valuable people. Our web site at www.kidpower.org offers many resources including local services, a library of free articles, educational materials for sale, and a free monthly enewsletter about teaching personal safety, boundary-setting, advocacy, and confidence. Our newest publication, *The KIDPOWER Book for Caring Adults*, is recommended by violence prediction expert and best-selling author Gavin deBecker, *Bay Area Parent – Silicon Valley*, and supernanny.us.com.

Take Charge of Safety

Take charge of the safety of every place where your children will be: at home, in child care, with friends, with family members, and at school. Be sure that: 1) The rules are clear; 2) There is proper adult supervision; and 3) You have a backup plan in case things go wrong. Think about safety with fire, water, cars, and natural disasters as well as with people. Help children create experiences and develop attitudes to build their belief in themselves as being strong, capable and important. Children learn from what they see adults do, so be sure that **you** are modeling positive beliefs.

Children can learn to take charge of their own safety by acting with awareness, calm and confidence. Prepare children to notice what is happening around them and to move away from danger. Teach children to set firm respectful boundaries, including with people they care about, and to speak up when they have a problem. Teach them to walk away from a confrontation instead of escalating it, even if someone is rude. Encourage children to tell you and other trusted adults about their problems so that they can get help and so that they do not have to feel alone.

Just talking about problems can increase anxiety for children, especially if their adults sound worried. Children learn best if their adults explain safety issues very calmly with a focus on how to be safe rather than on potential dangers -- and then help them to be successful in practicing skills. The younger a child is, the more literal that child is likely to be. Instead of telling scary stories, introduce and practice very clear rules. The older a child is, the more that child will want to feel like part of the team in figuring out what how to handle different problems. Ask children leading questions to help build their understanding, such as, "What's your safety plan if you need help at school?"

Make and Practice Safety Plans

The safety plan for younger children is to **Move Away** and **Check First** with their adults when they notice anything they are not **sure** is safe -- a pot boiling over, a spider, a dog, a car, a clown, a river, a police officer, or a stranger. Teach children that a stranger is someone who they do not know very well. Since most people are good, this means that most strangers are good. The safety plan for children on their own is to **Move Away** and **Check First** before they let strangers get close to them, talk to them, or give them anything, even their own things. The safety rule for older children, teenagers and anyone else who does not have an adult to check first with is to **Think First**, be ready to **Move Out of Reach**, and **go to Safety**, which is where there are people who can help them.

Children are more likely to be harmed by people they know than by strangers. Safety for young people lies in their adults knowing **where** they are going, **what** they are doing, and **who** they are with. Teach children to **Check First** before they change their plan, even with people they know. If children are going to be out on their own, teach them how to call you or another caregiver before changing their plan.

Adapt the checking/thinking first rule to every place a young person might go. Because homes are very different, make a safety plan that works for your situation about children checking before they open the door. Teach young people not to give personal information on the telephone, to people they meet casually, or over the internet. Teach them not to admit to being home alone. Make safety plans for how you want children to get help when they are: in a store, home alone, at a friend's house, lost, at camp, in your neighborhood, or at school. Discuss problems that might come up, such as "What is our safety plan if we get separated?" Or, "What if an adult asks you for help when you are alone?"

Make sure children know their home telephone number, how to use different types of telephones, and how to call 911. Explain that the safety plan is different in emergencies where children cannot check first, such as being trapped in a fire, lost in the woods, or injured. In that case, the safety plan is to get help, even from a stranger.

Build Clear Boundaries

The purpose of boundaries is to protect our personal space, bodies, time, feelings, and well being and to contain our impulses to intrude on the boundaries of others. The Kidpower principles for setting boundaries with people we know are: 1) We each belong to ourselves; 2) Some things are not a choice; 3) Problems should not be secrets; and 4) Keep telling until you get help. The more that adults can teach young people

to understand and protect their own boundaries and to see and respect the boundaries of others, the safer they are going to be.

Help children to identify and take the power out of their triggers (thoughts, words or behavior that cause them to explode with feelings) so that they will not be ruled by what others say and do. Coach children to look at you, tell you in a clear calm voice with polite firm language and to use their bodies to get you to stop different intrusions. You can practice by: standing too close; starting to tickle; pressuring child to go somewhere unsafe; creating emotional pressure ("Don't you like me?"); offering a bribe; or presenting a low-key threat (You HAVE to do what I say!).

The "I have a Safety Problem" Signal

Be sure that children know that you want them to tell you if they have a problem even if they promised someone not to. Explain that you might be busy and get annoyed when you are interrupted. Teach children that they sometimes have to wait if they want something, but to interrupt and keep asking if they need help. Teach children to persist in getting your attention by saying, "I have a safety problem!" Ask children occasionally, "Is there anything you have been wondering or worrying about that you have not told me?"

Reasons older children give for not talking to adults are: "I'm afraid they'll get upset, give me a lecture, or start yelling at somebody." Or, "They never do anything." Or, "The people I told on will take revenge on me." Or, "I broke too many rules to tell." Or, "I want to be grownup enough to handle things myself." Or, "I want to be loyal to my friends."

If you want young people to come to you with their problems, you have to be a good listener. **No matter what** a child or teenager tells you, your first job is to take a breath and do your best to stay calm. Put away any upset feelings even if this feels almost impossible. Start with a matter of fact statement like, "I am so glad you are telling me." Remember that you **do** want young people to feel safe with you, even if they have done something wrong. Remember that mistakes are part of learning and that testing the rules is part of growing up. After you have listened and fully understood what happened, then you can take whatever action seems appropriate.

Give Permission to Use Physical Self Defense Skills Appropriately

Any strong resistance will stop most assaults. Often, young people won't protect themselves because they don't want to get in trouble. Tell children that fighting is a last resort, and that they have your permission **only** if someone is about to harm them and they cannot leave or get help. Explore the option of self-defense training through programs such as Kidpower. Our website article on *How to Pick a Good Self-Defense Program* provides some useful guidelines.