

## **People Safety for Toddlers** *Self-Protection Tips for Young Children*

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- There is no substitute for constant supervision. Young children do not have the understanding or the skills to stay away from danger – whether this is an animal, a cliff, a piece of glass, an electric outlet, a car, or a person who might be unsafe.
- Pay attention to your own intuition. If you are even a little bit uncomfortable about a person or a situation involving your child, stay in charge. No matter who the other person is or what your relationship is, it is your job to speak up, stick around, intervene and keep watching until your concerns are addressed.
- Set a good example – model staying patient, using your words, and being careful.
- Teach children People Safety ideas and language by encouraging them to **YELL AND GET HELP!** if they feel scared – even if what they are scared of seems silly to you -- and to **CHECK FIRST** with you before they go anywhere, do anything new, talk with someone they don't know or touch anything unfamiliar.
- When you play chasing games like, "I'm going to **GET YOU!**" – sometimes have the children stop you by turning and yelling "**STOP!**" while making a stop sign motion or a fence with their hands. Then, coach children to run yelling "**I NEED HELP!**" to someone else and have that person tell the child, "I will help you!"
- Accept children's right to be upset or have unhappy feelings even if they do not have the right to choose. Say calmly, "I understand that you are upset and \_\_\_\_\_ (leaving the park, being in your car seat, changing your diaper, etc. etc.) is **NOT** your choice."
- Give children choices when you can. Being able to choose between the red cup or the blue cup, walking yourself or being carried, etc. helps children develop decision-making skills and gives them a sense of power.

- Remember that affection should always be a child's choice – let children choose hugging or kissing, even with Grandma. Teach children how to move away from unwanted touch or teasing and say, "Stop. I don't like it." Tell the adults or other children to respect the child's wishes by listening and stopping.
- Even in games, like tickling or roughhousing, teach children that their "NO!" means "NO!" and their "STOP!" means "STOP!" by people stopping when they hear these words.
- Teach children that PROBLEMS SHOULD NOT BE SECRETS and encourage them to tell you about their worries. Listen to their fears.
- Teach children to protect themselves emotionally by throwing hurting words into a trash can instead of taking them into their hearts. You can help them physically practice catching words that hurt and throwing these away while saying something nice to themselves out loud and taking the nice words in.
- Teach children to take compliments into their hearts and say, "Thank you!"