

# CHILDREN AND STRANGERS SECURITY

PROTECT YOUR KID(S)  
FROM THE POTENTIAL  
DANGERS THAT  
ENCOUNTERS WITH  
STRANGERS CAN  
RESULT IN



## Forget The "Stranger Danger" Tag Line



"Don't talk to strangers." "Stranger danger."

Yeah, we all know the catch lines and keywords, but what good is a keyword when a seemingly innocent old lady lays some tripe on your kid about helping her search for a lost dog?

The story pulls at their heart-strings, and they go along with it.

But what if that old lady is using the line to lure them somewhere?

On the other hand, in a public place, a well-meaning person might show the child a picture, and ask if they have seen his dog.

If the child screams "stranger danger" and runs off, it doesn't do either one of them much good.

The "stranger danger" fad had been known to prevent children from getting help when they need it, even from police officers and fire fighters.

Is that how you want your kid to behave, by reacting to every encounter with a new person as if they are about to be killed?

What about the new clerk at the candy store, or somebody injured in a car crash?

## Forget The "Stranger Danger" Tag Line



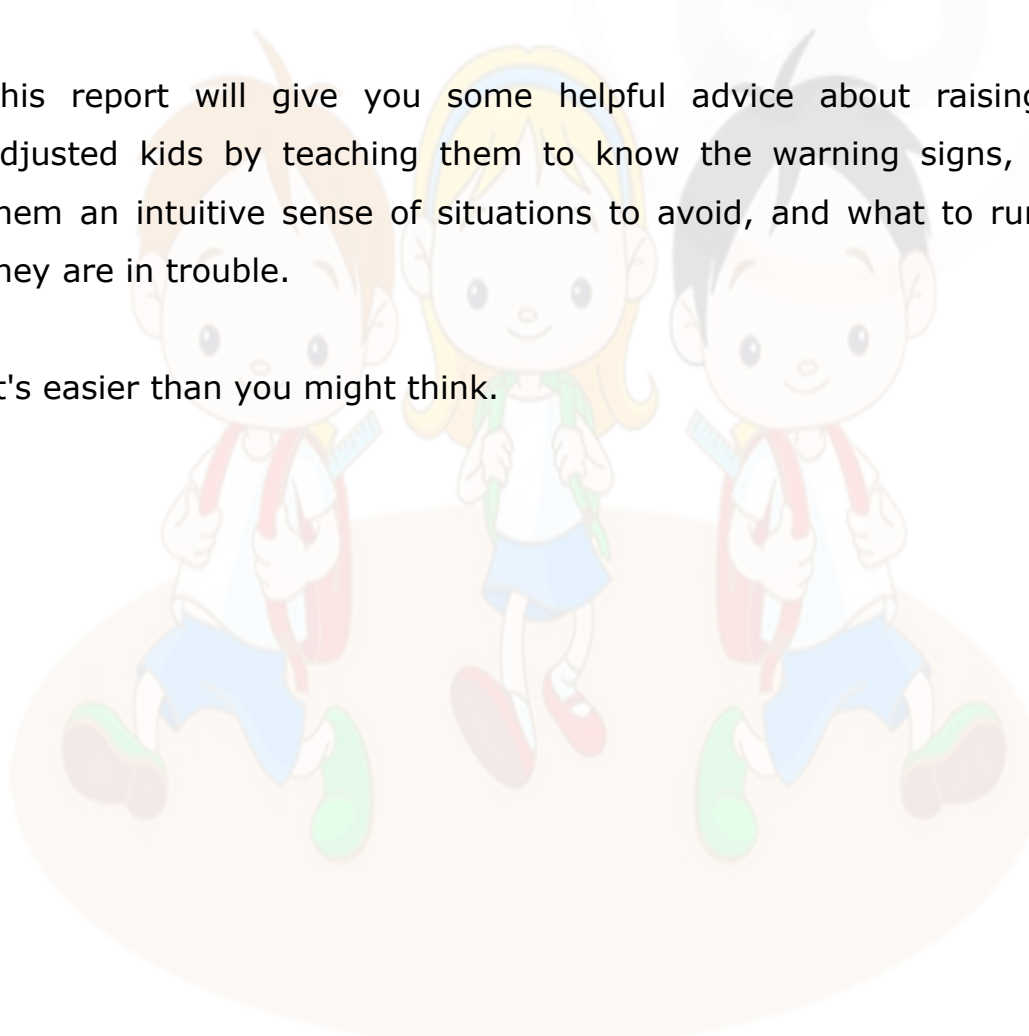
The fact is, that while these wonderful little phrases do a lot of good, they have the potential to do equally as much harm.

Don't rely on goofy slogans. Get involved, talk to your kids about everything, including people they see and wonder about.

Open up the lines of communication, and teach them some common sense about interacting with people.

This report will give you some helpful advice about raising well adjusted kids by teaching them to know the warning signs, giving them an intuitive sense of situations to avoid, and what to run to if they are in trouble.

It's easier than you might think.



## Get Started With The Worst



There's a reason that a knee-jerk reaction training like "stranger danger" is both important and a good place to begin.

Basically, it teaches kids that trust is something that has to be earned.

Being introduced to new people through a trusted contact, like Mom or Dad, is a great start, and I don't mean to devalue that philosophy, but it's only the beginning.

Learning to interact with new people on their own is important, even if you are standing right next to them.

Children need to learn that while they should be cautious, screaming when any random person speaks to them isn't the right response.

They will pick up cues from how you interact with other people, so be mindful when they are around.

Use every conversation as an opportunity to teach them something.

For instance, if you are out at the bookstore and meet another parent, interact with them, and discuss the interaction with the child afterward.

Tell them why it's okay to say "hi" and be polite, but not to follow the new person to a car or somewhere less public.

## Get Started With The Worst



Being polite doesn't mean that you immediately trust friendly people.

Open up the discussion. Encourage your kid to ask you about people that you see while out and about.

For instance, they might see a man in a dusty jacket who looks scary to them.

Encourage them to discretely ask about people they are unsure of. When they do, don't brush it off.

Explain to them that just because someone looks different, it doesn't mean they are dangerous, and that more attractive people aren't necessarily nice.

When possible, encourage them to start a conversation with people they are curious about, with you there of course, and discuss the conversation with them afterward.

Being curious is healthy, it's how we learn.

Teach your kids the lesson of trusting nobody.

No matter how nice the person seems on the surface, they should never talk about where they live or go to school.



## Get Started With The Worst



Instead they should focus on things they are interested in, such as “my best friend and I like to make models.”

They don't need to say the friend's name, or where and when they work on the models. Teach them to steer the conversation toward the interesting parts without divulging certain information.

Again, they can be polite without getting themselves into trouble.

Make certain information secret, just between the family, and discuss topics that are okay to talk about with anyone, such as a favorite video game.

Personal distance isn't only polite, it's safe. When talking to anyone they aren't familiar with, they should maintain a certain physical distance, out of arms reach of the new person.

If the other person in the conversation continues to break that distance barrier, then they should assume the worst, end the conversation, and walk away.

If the person is persistent, or tries to touch them, then they need to get away as fast as possible.

Again, safe, but reasonable. Talking is okay, touching isn't.

## Safe People and Safe Places



The home is the safe zone, and should be the default place to run when confused or feeling threatened.

The trust nobody mentality works to a point, but if a police officer wants to speak with them, they should know which people are generally going to be safe, and how to identify them.

If they are on their own, and need to find an adult when surrounded by strangers, let them know that families, police, employees in a store, and firefighters are the best people to run toward for help.

Talk with them about places they can run toward if they feel threatened, or anything out of the ordinary happens.

There's a danger in hiding somewhere isolated, like a bathroom.

Everywhere your child finds them self should be in the vicinity of a "safe zone." These tend to be populated places.

They should keep track of where the supervising adult is at all times, so they know which direction to go.

Let them know that if all else fails, they should find an employee, a security guard, or a police officer.

## Be Familiar With The Traps



Knowing who to talk to when you aren't around will give them a point of reference.

As an adult, we learned at some point how to spot when someone is putting us on.

You can usually feel a sales pitch coming from a mile away.

Sometimes, people just seem creepy by the way they speak.

And how many of us would hop in a car with a total stranger, just because they made an offer.

We can spot these traps, but they aren't always easy. Let your kids know what to watch out for.

Treat gift offerings as a warning sign. There are probably some gifts that are completely appropriate, like a store clerk offering free samples, but in general kids should be taught that gifts are the most common type of lure.

If there is anything suspicious about it, or if they need to go anywhere before receiving the gift, then it's a trap, or should at least be treated as one.



## Be Familiar With The Traps



There's no reason to get in a car to receive anything, and if it isn't being handed out freely to everyone, then it should be avoided.

Don't trust edibles. Any kind of food offering should be rejected by default, especially if it comes from the pocket of an unfamiliar person. Tell your kids that if they can eat it, no matter how tasty it looks, to reject the offering.

Don't just make a rule. Explain to them how people will act nice and offer tainted food to knock them out.

Or worse, the food item may be poisoned. Let them know exactly how dangerous food offerings can be.

Knowing the danger will keep them safe even when they aren't by your side.

Never get into a car, or follow a stranger anywhere. If you have to go somewhere to continue a conversation, then it isn't a conversation you need to have.

Stay in public, and in sight. There's no reason why any adult should invite a child into a random vehicle.

Remind them to maintain the safety space.

## Be Familiar With The Traps



Teach them to beware of sob stories. Someone may tell them a sad story, and it might be a true story, but in general, they don't know the person and don't owe them anything.

All of the other rules apply, and in fact, they should be overly cautious of any story that starts with someone needing help.

What help could an adult legitimately expect from a ten-year-old?

Other than perhaps giving directions or telling them if they've seen the lost dog or not.

There's no reason to follow a strange person where they could become a softer target.

Any offering, money, food, or otherwise, should be turned down. If something sounds too good to be true, then it is.

Teach them to evaluate offers of anything, not just material things.

Promises of finding money, or cheap candy, new friends and hangouts, or whatever else.

If someone is pitching a freebie, it's best to end the conversation and walk away.

## Be Familiar With The Traps



Saying “no” to an adult can be intimidating when you are three feet tall.

Let your child know that it's okay to tell a stranger “no,” even if they are an adult.

This is a person they don't know, and owe nothing to. They should feel comfortable declining offerings and ending conversations. Being an adult isn't enough to justify telling them what to do.

They should consider the request (in case it's a librarian asking them to be quiet) and decide for themselves if obliging it could put them at risk.

Again, education is the key, and discussion about these things will bring more clarity to them.

At the end of the day, children are going to have questions.

They aren't going to know how to act or what to say in every single situation.

The best advice that you can probably give a child is, if they don't know what to do when they encounter a stranger, then the best advice is to walk away.

## Be Familiar With The Traps



And you should encourage them to discuss the situation with you later.

When you ask them about their day, ask them about their conversations, or if they met anyone new.

People with criminal intent aren't stupid, and anyone with malicious intentions toward your child is going to start by trying to befriend them.

This could take weeks or months, especially if you've taught them well, so ask about new friends.

A child will be more than happy to share the story about their “new friend” who hangs around the bus stop after school lets out.

Opening these communication lines with them could give you hints at potential problems before an incident occurs.

Make a point of meeting their friends.

## Safety Education Is The Key



At the end of the day, how your child interacts with others in those unfamiliar situations involving strangers is going to depend on the education that they get from you.

You may notice that I haven't mentioned safety whistles, cell phones, or Heaven forbid some kind of tagging.

Giving them an emergency line to reach you if they are in danger, or at least a way to make a ton of noise and attract attention to themselves is generally a good thing, but it should be seen as a secondary way of protecting them.

Keeping them out of danger before they would need to cry for help is best, and that only comes through education, and sharing your experiences. Talk with them about people you meet and ask about people they see or meet.

When I was in college, I walked into the spiritual center on campus, which had an interesting sign hanging on the wall. It read, "Talk to Strangers." Obviously, it was aimed at college-aged people, but it carried an important point.

Avoiding human contact out of fear isn't the best solution for adults, and it shouldn't be the only solution for children.



## Safety Education Is The Key



While some kids are naturally going to be shy, they shouldn't be afraid to have ordinary conversations with people they meet, and they should start learning basic social skills while they are young.

Positive encounters with new people, especially people their own age, will lead to networking abilities when they get older.

It will provide them the means to handle these situations safely.

Discussing encounters at home or in the car can lead to a better adjusted child who knows the dangers of the world around them, and what they can do to avoid them.

Start by supervising their communication to the waitress who takes your order, the lady behind the desk at the candy store, or people you meet through the course of your day.

It will teach them what is normal. It will foster an intuitive sense of knowing when a person is acting strangely, and could be a threat.

It will give them a sense of when it's time to walk away, and potentially get help.

In the end, the education they receive will offer more protection than any safety whistle or "stranger danger" slogan can provide.