



Preventing Child Abductions

*National Children's Crisis Charity KidsPeace Provides Prevention Tips
and Perspective for Parents Worried about Kidnapping*

NEW YORK – Nothing is more terrifying for parents than the thought of their child being kidnapped. “It is truly as close to a primal fear as you can get,” said Lorrie Henderson, Ph.D., acting president of the 125-year-old national children’s crisis charity KidsPeace. “Fortunately, as scary as the thought is, parents should know that kidnapping by strangers is quite rare. The reality is that it is 10,000 times more likely that a child will be abused than be abducted – and not by a stranger, but by someone he or she knows. It is important not to ignore more likely dangers, but we all should know some basic facts and prevention tips to further lower the already remote chance of your child becoming a victim.”

Most kidnappings are by relatives and estranged parents. Still, there are things parents can do to protect their kids without scaring them.

“It is our job as parents and caretakers to protect our children,” says Dr. Herb Mandell, medical director of the KidsPeace Children’s Hospital. “You can break this down into what parents should DO and what parents should SAY to their kids.”

WHAT PARENTS SHOULD DO:

- The key thing is that children, especially below school age, really need to be supervised by an adult. Children should be in sight of an adult, and anyone who comes around should be able to see there is an adult watching.
- If you go inside, to cook dinner, or there are other reasons where you’re out of sight for a period of time, bring your kids in the house to play. You should say “When I’m done, you can go out again.”
- Rebuild a sense of community in your neighborhood. Individual parents can’t always supervise kids, or may be working, and this underlines the importance of communities. It’s time for all of us to know our neighbors a little bit better and work together to supervise and keep an eye on our kids. Make sure your kids know your neighbors and your neighbors know your kids. You can make deals with other trusted parents, or work with neighbors, friends, and others. You might live near people who are retired and who you may know well who might be approached to keep an eye on the children.
- Make sure you ALWAYS know where your kids are and that there is always an adult, especially for younger, preschool children

WHAT PARENTS SHOULD SAY TO KIDS:

- Tell kids they should not go out alone unless there is an adult you believe suitable is watching.
- If there is no adult available, they need to be with a family member or friend.
- Tell kids that if they're approached by anyone they don't know, they should keep their distance, and if they're uncomfortable to leave. They should walk away with their friends and go to an adult they trust. You don't want to make kids paranoid about all strangers, but let them know how they should react.
- You can create a code word to know whether you really sent an adult to pick them up at school or anywhere else. Have them ask the adult what the code word is and not to go with them if they do not know it.
- If a stranger asks your child for help, they should say to ask a grownup.
- If kids find themselves in a strange or uncomfortable situation, tell them to seek out an adult they know for help.
- Give kids other commonsense tips about strangers: Without scaring them, tell them not to open the door to strangers if they're home alone, never get in a car with a stranger, etc.
- Teach children their phone numbers and their home address. If they can also learn your cell phone or BlackBerry number, that is even better.

“The single best piece of advice is to keep children in visual contact. Build networks of adults you can trust, and maintain open communications with your kids so they will tell you of any problems or warning signs in their lives,” says President O’Donnell. “Child abductions are rare, but if we can learn a couple of simple tips to prevent even a few situations like the ones we hear about on the news, it’s well worth the effort.”

For more information on preventing or handling dangers to children, go to www.kidspeace.org . Older children who are worried by kidnapping or other problems can go to www.TeenCentral.net for free, safe and anonymous help.

KidsPeace is a 125-year-old national children’s crisis charity dedicated to giving hope, help, and healing to children facing crisis. Based in Bethlehem, PA with more than 50 centers nationwide, KidsPeace directly helps thousands of children a day to overcome the crises of growing up. Supported by VIP leaders including its national spokesperson Leeza Gibbons and child safety and self-esteem icon RETRO BILL, KidsPeace helps millions more each year through prevention and awareness programs. KidsPeace was named “The Outstanding Organization” of its kind in the country by the American Association of Psychiatric Services for Children and was called “a prototype of what we need for all children everywhere” by the late, nationally renowned child and family expert, Dr. Lee Salk.

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