



PROTECTING YOUR CHILDREN



A playground bully, an adult stranger, even a familiar grown-up, can represent a threat to a child – physically or sexually. One widely used set of guidelines has been developed by KIDSCAPE, a children's charity active in protecting children. Below is a ten-point code to help parents protect their children.

1. To be safe

Teach children that everyone has rights, such as the right to breathe, which should not be taken away. Tell children that no one should take away their right to be safe.

2. To protect their own bodies

Children need to know that their body belongs to them, particularly the private parts covered by their swimsuits.

3. To say no

Tell children it's OK to say no to anyone who tries to harm them. Most children are taught to listen to and obey adults and older people without question.

4. To get help against bullies

Bullies usually pick on younger children. Tell children to enlist the help of friends or say no without fighting and to tell an adult. Bullies are cowards and a firm loud NO from a group of children with the threat of adult intervention often puts them off. In cases of real physical danger children often have no choice but to surrender to the bully's demands. Sometimes children will fight and get hurt to protect

a possession because of the fear of what will happen when they arrive home without it – 'My mum will kill me for letting the bullies take my bike. It cost a lot of money'. Tell children that keeping themselves safe is the most important consideration.

5. To tell

Assure your children that, no matter what happens, you will not be angry with them and that you want them to tell you of any incident. Children can also be very protective of parents and might not tell about a frightening occurrence because they are worried about your feelings.

6. To be believed

When children are told to go to an adult for help, they need to know that they will be believed and supported. Although sometimes an immediate reaction is to say 'I told you so', this will not help the child to resolve the problem. It could also prevent the child from seeking help another time. This is especially true in the case of sexual assault, as children rarely lie about it. If the child is not believed when he or she tells, the abuse may continue for years and result in suffering and guilt for the child.

7. Not to keep secrets

Teach children that some secrets should NEVER be kept, no matter if they promised not to tell. Child molesters known to the child often say that a kiss or touch is 'our secret'. This confuses the child who has been taught always to keep secrets.

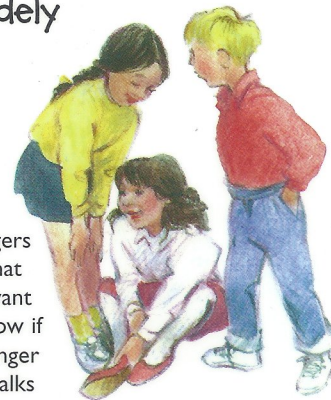
8. To refuse touches

Explain to children that they can say yes or no to touches and kisses from anyone, but that no one should ask them to keep it a secret. Children sometimes do not want to be hugged or kissed, but that should be a matter of choice, not fear. They should not be forced to hug or kiss anyone.

9. Not to talk to strangers

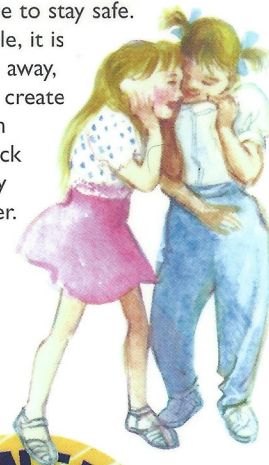
It is NEVER a good idea to talk to a stranger. Since most well-meaning adults or teenagers do not approach children who are by themselves (unless the child is obviously lost or in distress), teach children to ignore any such approach. Children do not have to be rude, they can pretend not to hear and quickly walk or run away. Tell children you will never be angry with them for refusing to talk to

strangers and that you want to know if a stranger ever talks to them.



10. To break rules

Tell your children that they have your permission to break all rules to protect themselves, and tell them you will always support them if they must break a rule to stay safe. For example, it is OK to run away, to yell and create a fuss, even to lie or kick to get away from danger.



For further help call: ChildLine, Tel: 0800 1111, National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC, covers England, Wales, Northern Ireland) Tel: 0800 800 500, for Scotland call Children First, Tel: 0131 337 8539.

Home Office website: www.homeoffice.gov.uk/

For free booklets on protecting children send a SAE to: KIDSCAPE, 2 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0DH Tel: 0171 730 3300. www.kidscape.org.uk/kidscape





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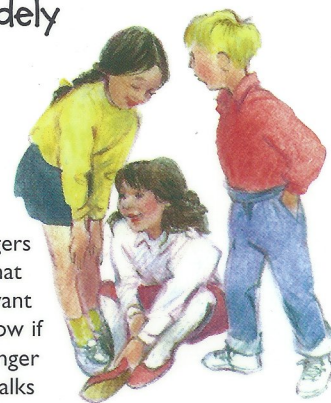
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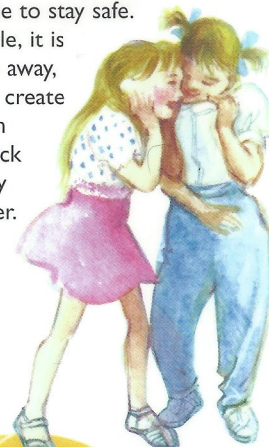
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