

Keep Them Safe

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Dear Parents

KIDSCAPE, the campaign for children's safety, was founded in 1984 to enable children to learn about personal safety. With the help of parents, teachers, police and other adults, children are taught ways to deal with bullies, getting lost, approaches by strangers and even known adults who may try to abuse them.

Being a parent myself, I know only too well how concerned we are to help children deal with dangers without frightening them. This booklet for parents has ideas about what children may need to know to stay safe from a variety of dangers. The messages, based upon the KIDSCAPE schools programmes, are practical and non-sensational.

The booklet lists organisations and resources which may be helpful. It has a series of 'What If?' questions to help your children think about personal safety. There are also suggestions on dealing with an upsetting disclosure from a child.

Happily, most children will not be abducted or abused, though they may be bullied or get lost at some time. As parents we can only do our best by teaching them the KIDSCAPE KeepSafe Code and hoping that they will never have to use it!

We are delighted that the National Lottery Charities Board has joined KIDSCAPE in its campaign to keep children safe and we are very grateful to them for sponsoring the cost of this booklet.

Yours sincerely,

Michele Elliott
Director

KIDSCAPE
2 Grosvenor Gardens

Safety Ideas

GETTING LOST

Arrange a place to meet in case you get separated from your children while shopping or in a park or some other public place. If they get lost in or near a shop, tell them to ask the shop assistant for help. Tell them not to go outside if you get separated.

If travelling on public transport, arrange what to do if you or they get left on a bus or train. Some parents tell them to stay on the bus or train and tell the guard. Others say to get off at the next stop and wait on the platform or at the stop.

PUBLIC TOILETS

If possible, go with your children when using any public toilet. Talk with children about what to do if they are accosted in a public toilet. Tell them to leave immediately should anyone ask them 'if they would like to see a surprise' or offers to take them into a cubicle or tries to touch them.

LIFTS

Explain that they can wait for the next lift if they feel worried about someone. They can also get out of the lift and walk or even ring a doorbell of someone else's flat, should they be in difficulty.

BABYSITTERS

It can be difficult to find a good babysitter, but be aware that child molesters have advertised themselves as sitters in the hope of getting near children. Avoid using newspapers or notices and:

- Try to get a friend or family member
- Get references on people you don't know well
- Regardless of who stays with your children, be alert to their reactions when you say the sitter is coming
- If you are worried, ring home and ask to talk to your children. Arrange a code so they can tell you if they are frightened
- tell your children never to keep secrets and to tell you if the sitter asks them to keep kisses, hugs or touches secret

Points for Parents

Children need to know how:

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.

TO PROTECT THEIR OWN BODIES

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

TO SAY NO

Tell children it's all right to say no to anyone if that person tries to harm them. Most children are taught to listen to and obey adults and older people without question.

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.

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.

TO BE BELIEVED

When children are told to go to an adult for help, they need to know 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 very 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.

TO NOT 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.

TO REFUSE TOUCHES

Explain to children that they can say yes or no to touches or kisses from anyone, but that no one should ask them to keep touching 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.

TO NOT 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 talks to them.

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 all right to run away, to yell and create a fuss, even to lie or kick to get away from danger.

The Keepsafe Code

1. Hugs

2. Body

3. No

4. Run or Get Away

5. Yell

6. Tell

7. Secrets

8. Bribes

9. Code

1. Hugs

Hugs and kisses are nice, especially from people we like. Even hugs and kisses that feel good and that you like should never be kept secret.

2. Body

Your body belongs to you and not to anyone else. This means all of your body. If anyone harms you or tries to touch your body in a way which confuses or frightens you, say **NO**, if possible, and **tell**.

3. No

If anyone older than you, even someone you know, tries to touch you in a way you don't like or that confuses you, or which they say is supposed to be a secret, say **NO** in a very loud voice.

4. Run or Get Away

Don't talk to anyone you don't know when you are alone, or just with other children. You don't have to be rude, just pretend you didn't hear and keep going. If a stranger, or a bully, or even someone you know tries to harm you, get away and get help. Make sure you always go towards other people or to a shop, if you can.

5. Yell

Wherever you are, it is all right to yell if someone is trying to hurt you.

Practice yelling as loud as you can in a big, deep voice by taking a deep breath and letting the yell come from your stomach, not from your throat.

6. Tell

Tell a grown-up you trust if you are worried or frightened. If the first grown-up you tell doesn't believe or help you, keep telling until someone does. It might not be

easy, but even if something has already happened that you have never told before, try to tell now. Who could you tell?

7. Secrets

Secrets such as surprise birthday parties are fun. But some secrets are not good and should never be kept. No bully should ever make you keep the bullying a secret and no-one should ask you to keep a kiss, hug or touch secret. If anyone does, even if you know that person, tell a grown-up you trust.

8. Bribes

Don't accept money or sweets or a gift from anyone without first checking with your parents. Most of the time it will be all right, like when you get a present for your birthday from your grandma. But some people try to trick children into doing something by giving them sweets or money. This is called a bribe - don't ever take one! Remember, it is possible that you might have to do what a bully or older person tells you, so that you can keep yourself safe. Don't feel bad if that happens because the most important thing is for you to be safe.

9. Code

Have a code word or sign with your parents or guardians, which only you and they know, if they need to send someone to collect you, they can give that person the code. Don't tell the code to anyone else.

Kidscape Extra

- Don't answer the door if you are at home on your own.
- Don't tell anyone over the telephone that you are at home alone. Say that your mum will ring back, she's in the bath - or any other excuse you can think of.
- Always tell your parents or whoever is taking care of you where you are going and how you can be contacted.
- If you get lost, go to a shop or a place with lots of people, and ask for help or find a policeman or policewoman to ask.
- travel in a carriage of a train where there are other people.
- When you're out on your own, keep far enough away from people you don't know so that you can't be grabbed and so can run away.
- Never play in deserted or dark places.
- Carry enough money for your return trip home and never spend it on anything else.
- Memorise your telephone number and address.
- Know how to contact your parents or a neighbour.

- If you have no money, but need to ring home in a emergency, dial 100 and ask the operator to place a reverse charge call.
- To make an emergency telephone call:
 - Dial 999 (You don't need to put money in a coin box phone), the operator will say 'which service?'
 - You say 'police, fire or ambulance'.
 - They put you through to the service, who will take your name and where you are, so they can find you. Then you tell them what's wrong.
- This sounds like it would take a long time, but it happens very quickly. The operator listens in case of difficulty.
- Always get an adult to make an emergency telephone call, if possible.
- NO ONE should ever make one unless there is a real emergency.

Bullying

POSSIBLE SIGNS

Children may:

- Be frightened of the journey to or from school
- Have nightmares
- Be unwilling to go to school
- Begin doing poorly in their school work
- Become withdrawn, distressed, attempt suicide
- Have unexplained bruises, cuts, scratches, clothing torn
- Have possessions or money go missing
- Give improbable excuses to explain any of the above

If you are concerned, talk with your child and then with the school. If you are still worried, get in contact with the school governors or the education authority or even your MP.

TEACH STRATEGIES

- If possible laugh at or ignore the bullying
- Don't fight to protect possessions
- Practice walking in a confident manner
- Shout 'NO' loudly - practice in the mirror
- There is safety in numbers - try to stay with a group

- Send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to KIDSCAPE for free guidelines for teachers, parents and children.

No one deserves to be bullied. We should value and encourage individuality, not bully children because they are different.

What To Do If Your Child Tells You

Having been through the KIDSCAPE Keepsafe Code with your child or children it is possible that you may be told about a problem or incident which has worried them. In many cases this will be about problems such as bullying but it is important to let your child see that you are prepared and willing to listen to them.

If your child tells you about a more serious problem your reaction will often determine how much they will tell.

Find a quiet place to talk.

- Although this is a difficult situation for any parent, stay calm and be reassuring.
- Reassure your child. Children may have been threatened or be concerned about your feelings, or that you will not love them or will be angry with them about what happened.
- Take what is said seriously. Children rarely lie about sexual abuse.
- Listen, but try not to press your child for information. Say that you are glad the child told you.
- Children are never to blame for sexual assault. One way to help them realise this is to explain that the offender has a problem.
- If necessary seek medical advice, contact the police or social services or the organisations listed in this booklet.

If the children are angry sad, fearful or feeling guilty, acknowledge that these are natural feelings, but keep telling them that they are not to blame. Say that you will keep them safe and do everything you can to help.

If you find out that your child has been assaulted, you will probably need help dealing with your own feelings. Try to find someone sympathetic who you can talk to about it.

Finally, try not to keep discussing either the assault or your feelings about the offender in front of the child.

What If?

The following questions are from **Keeping Safe, a Practical Guide to Talking with Children**. They may help you to talk about safety issues with your children. Discussing and thinking about what to do may be more helpful than having 'right' answers. Sometimes there are no 'right' answers, just possibilities.

What if...

- you were being bullied and had promised not to tell?
- you got lost in a park (shop, busy high street, etc)?
- you were on your way home and someone was following you?
- someone asked you to keep a kiss, hug or touch a secret?
- you notice a fire in the kitchen and no one is home?
- you are home alone and someone comes to the door?
- you see a friend steal something?
- you saw a flasher?
- someone rings and says rude things on the telephone?
- a stranger asks you directions, and offers you a ride, sweets, etc
- your dog ran into the road and a car was coming?
- you are alone in a lift and someone you feel uncomfortable about gets in?

What if? questions are simple, easy to make up and useful for teaching personal safety to children.

Resources Available from Kidscape

FOR PARENTS

Keeping Safe, a practical guide to talking with children, M.Elliott, Hodder.
Guide for discussing safety issues with children and teens.

501 Ways To Be A Good Parent, M. Elliott, Hodder.
Tried and tested ways to survive and thrive as a parent.

101 Ways to deal with Bullying, A Guide for Parents, M. Elliott, Hodder.
Commonsense advice for parents.

FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Bullying Wise Guide, M. Elliott, Hodder.
Commonsense ideas for dealing with bullying. Ages 10 to 14.

Feeling Happy, Feeling Safe, M. Elliott, Hodder & Stoughton.
Colour picture book involving children in learning what to do about getting lost, bullies, secrets and other personal safety issues. Ages 3 to 7.

The Willow Street Kids, M. Elliott, Pan Macmillan.
Chosen for the Good Book Guide, this fun book weaves a story around a group of children and how they keep safe. Ages 7 to 11.

The Bullies Meet The Willow Street Kids, Michele Elliott, Pan MacMillan.
The Willow Street Kids enter secondary school and have to deal with bullies. Ages 7 to 11.

Cosmo and Dibs Keep Safe, video (BBC and KIDSCAPE). Short stories about getting lost, strangers and what to do, including teaching notes. Ages 3 to 6, 27 minutes.

Now I Can Tell You My Secret, video and teaching notes, Walt Disney and KIDSCAPE. Fictional story of a boy who tells his mother about the man next door. Ages 8 to 11, 20 minutes.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

KIDSCAPE has free booklets and leaflets about bullying, protecting children from paedophiles, coping with teenagers. For one free copy and information about KIDSCAPE materials, send a large SAE with 60 pence stamps to:

KIDSCAPE
2 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0DH
Telephone: 0207 730 3300
Fax: 0207 730 7081
www.kidscape.org.uk

Help

The following organisations may be able to offer additional help. Please visit our web site, www.kidscape.org.uk, and go to the *Links* section for further details

Police, social services, education departments and child guidance clinics are available in your area. In addition, you may wish to contact:

Children's Legal Centre 2-5pm Mon-Fri	01206 873820
ChildLine 24 hour helpline for children	0800 1111
Citizen's Advice Bureau (see local directory)	
Education Otherwise For home education	0870 730 0074
NSPCC	0800 800 500
ParentLine	0808 800 2222
M.O.S.A.C. (Mothers of Sexually Abused Children)	0800 980 1958
Rape Crisis Centres (see local directory)	
Children 1st Scotland	0131 337 8539
Samaritans 24 hours	0345 909090
KIDSCAPE Helpline for parents of children being bullied. 10 a.m. to 4pm Monday to Friday	0207 730 3300

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