



## **Tips for Parents and Their Children on Understanding Good and Bad Strangers**

Teaching your children about strangers can begin as early as when a child becomes verbal. Be sure to keep in mind your own child's developmental level and age when talking to them. Older children are typically ready for a more complex discussion compared to younger children. Equally important is letting your child know that there are good strangers and bad strangers.

### **Good Strangers**

Not every stranger is dangerous. Be sure to let your child know who safe strangers are. Family members, family friends, trusted neighbors, police officers, fire fighters, and teachers are all good examples of safe strangers. Make sure your child knows that you can't tell if someone is a bad stranger just by looking at them. People they think look "scary" to the child are not necessarily bad strangers and people who look "nice" to the child are not necessarily good strangers.

Pointing out safe strangers can help your child recognize safe adults in situations where a stranger approaches them. When you are driving or walking with your child be sure to point out fire stations and police cars and tell them those are safe strangers to go to if they are ever in a dangerous situation.

### **Bad Strangers and Recognizing Suspicious Behavior**

Tell your child that it is OK to tell an adult they do not know, "No." Teaching your child to be assertive can help them stay safe. You can also help your child remain safe by teaching them to recognize dangerous situations.

For example, suspicious behavior and warning signs for dangerous situations involving strangers include someone:

- asking them to disobey their parents;
- making them feel uncomfortable;
- asking them to keep a secret;
- following them;
- offering them something to eat;
- asking the child to help them with something, like finding a lost dog;
- asking a child for directions;
- inviting the child into their car or home; and
- touching them without their permission.

When these situations arise, the National Crime Prevention Council advises that children act with, “No, Go, Yell, Tell.” It is OK in these situations for a child to tell an adult “no”, to run away from the adult and yell for help as loud as they can or find a safe adult to tell them what happened. There are also ways to help a child remain safe.

### **Ways Your Child Can Stay Safe**

Encourage your child to play outdoors in groups, with multiple children. Playing with others is safety in numbers. As a parent or guardian, be aware of where your child is. Ask your child to check-in with you and ask permission to go anywhere. Make sure your child knows their home address and important telephone numbers.

You can also point out safe places to your child. Show them neighbor’s homes or neighborhood shops they can go to for safety. You can show them safe routes to take and roads to take to get home.

Help your child learn to trust his or her instincts. Teach your child that if they feel uncomfortable or frightened they should trust these feelings and get away from the situation and adult. Reassure your child that even if they feel uncomfortable with an adult they know it is still OK to run away. Tell them their safety is of the utmost importance. It is OK to tell your child to do anything and everything they can to get away from a dangerous situation.

*References from the National Crime Prevention Council.*