

Health, Safety and Environment

Parents can teach kids to stop Abductions

It's every parent's worst nightmare: the thought of a stranger kidnapping your child. Child abductions have been making headlines more and more these days. The most frightening was the image of the young Florida girl being led away by a male stranger. Why did she go with him? Why didn't she scream or fight? Perhaps she thought that she wouldn't have a chance to get away from him.

Many kids have been grabbed by adults and have gotten away, even though they've been much smaller and lighter. You can teach your children techniques to resist and escape from a predator.

The best method, of course, is prevention. Children should be taught how to avoid situations where they can be kidnapped. They should avoid being alone, and should not take shortcuts. They should never walk over to a car for any reason. They should deny requests from strangers, which is a common abduction ploy. Tell them that if a stranger needs help, they can get it from another adult, not a child. Tell them that you'd never send a stranger to pick them up without a special password. And remind them that 911 calls at pay phones are free.

So what should a child do if they come face to face with a kidnapper? They should not leave the place of the abduction. A kidnapper wants to go somewhere alone with the child. He may threaten the child, but he's not planning to hurt the child right there. That happens later. Teach your child that even if the kidnapper has a gun or a knife, they still should fight and resist and try to escape right away; they'll have a better



chance of staying safe if they can get away before they are trapped in the kidnapper's home or vehicle. If they are shot during the escape, then at least a public place will afford a better chance of having people around to help them.

There are several techniques children can use to escape from a kidnapper:

1. As soon as the abduction begins, the child should yell and scream; they should make as much noise as loudly as possible - and continue the noise. Tell them it's ok to scream no matter what the abductor tells them. And they should continue screaming throughout the abduction. Remember, bad people don't want attention from good adults!

2. If the child is in a public place where other people are present, instruct them to use the "**Velcro® Technique**". According to Bob Stuber, a former police officer and a child safety expert, in addition to yelling for help they can grab hold of another adult for help. (This is helpful in today's society when people don't want to get involved in other people's problems.) Tell the child that if he or she can't get anyone's attention to grab onto a passerby (preferably a mother with kids or someone in a uniform) and hang onto that person..... and don't let go even if you don't know that person. The child should say "I need help" and "I need the police" and "I won't let go until the police come" as loudly as possible. If the person shakes them

off, they should grab onto them again and hold on for dear life. That person may be in a hurry and may not want to get involved. They should continue until the stranger agrees to help or someone else notices and comes to their aid.

3. By using the "**Windmill Technique**" a 90-pound child can get away from a 250-pound man. If the adult grabs them by the arm and begins to pull them toward a waiting car, they can break the abductor's grip by rotating their arm forward in a big circle, like a windmill. This will catch the abductor off guard. The child should then run and scream loudly for help.

4. The **Bicycle Technique** can be effective if the child is riding or resting near a bicycle and is approached by a would-be kidnapper. Instruct the child to hold on to the bicycle with a death grip, scream as loudly as possible - and don't let go no matter what! It's very unlikely that an abductor could drag both your child and the bicycle into a vehicle. This technique saved a West Coast girl from certain abduction. The abductor was so frustrated with her not cooperating that he started to yell, "Let go of the bike," which attracted the attention of a couple who was walking their dog. When he realized what happened, he fled and the girl was saved.



Teach these methods to your children. Practice and review them. You can empower your child!

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Teach kids to escape from a stranger's car

Would your child know what to do if he/she was abducted and shoved into a car? According to Bob Stuber, a national safety expert, your child's next choices are critical in staying alive. If your child is somehow pulled into a stranger's car, they must remain calm and remember there are things they can do to help themselves.



They should try to escape.

The first step should be for the child to open the door and get out - even if the abductor says don't touch anything or don't move.

If the child is in a four-door car, they can escape by jumping into the back seat and going quickly out a back door.

They should try to attract attention.

Teach your child that he/she can attract attention by jumping into the driver's lap then screaming and honking the horn.

If the car is stopped at a stop light or a stop sign when there's a car in front of the abductor's vehicle, tell your child to push the gas pedal down. This could cause the vehicle to rear-end the one in front of it, drawing attention to the abductor's vehicle. The abductor's license plate number is likely to be taken and the police may be called. The vehicle may also be disabled. (In spite of the obvious risk of injury to the child and others, the odds of surviving an accident of this nature are better than surviving at the abductor's hands.)

If your child has anything identifiable - like a bracelet - they should remove it and toss it out the window if they can. The primary problem with child abductions is kids leave absolutely no clues.

They should try to "Break the Car".

Disabling a kidnapper's car can help in several ways. It can draw attention to the vehicle, may cause service personnel to get involved, and will leave the abductor without transportation. It changes the abductor's strategy and increases the chance of the child's escape.

Teach your child how to reach up under the dashboard on the driver's side and grab a handful of wires and pull them as hard as they can to break them loose. This should disable the car or at the very least disable the turn signals and lights. This works on most vehicles and can be accomplished even while the car is moving.

If the driver stops and gets out of the car (for gas or food), your child can make sure the driver can't restart the car when he returns. They can use an object to jam the car's ignition to prevent the abductor from inserting his keys and starting the car. A small button (removed their clothing) can be inserted into the key slot like a coin in a video game. If a button is not available, your child can use a stick, chewing gum, a hair pin, a nail file or even a small pebble to jam the ignition.



If your child can't find anything that will jam into the key slot, they can try to break the car by leaning on the gear selector and trying to break it off. If the keys are in the car and the driver is in the seat next to your child, they can try to remove the keys to throw them out the window. If they manage to get out of the car with the keys, they shouldn't keep them with them. They should throw them as far away as they can, in some bushes where the driver will have to hunt for them or in a big dumpster so he or she will have to dig through the trash to get them back. Then run and scream!

Another technique is to have the child turn on the headlights in the daytime. There is a chance this may cause the battery to run down and involve service personnel. Teach your child how to operate headlight switches in various vehicles.

How could your child escape if the abductor puts them into the trunk of the car?



They should try to attract attention from inside the trunk.

When the car is in motion, it's probably fruitless to kick and scream since it's doubtful anyone would hear them. But if the car is stopped in traffic, your child can use both feet to kick the trunk lid as hard as they can. Someone nearby might notice signs that your child is trapped in the trunk and call the police.

Have the child break the brake lights.

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Teach your child how to find the wires that lead to the taillights; the wires may be hidden behind panels and carpeting. They need to pull the wires all the way out to disable the brake lights. An alert police officer may notice the burned-out brake light and stop the car.

Teach your child how to get their hand outside of the trunk and to wave it to attract a potential rescuer. Although it seems there isn't a space between the trunk and the bottom of the car, many cars have weather stripping or rubber seals around their trunk lids. A child can start tearing it



away, or try to move it aside, then squeeze their hand out the small space between the trunk lid and the back of the car. They should keep their hand outside and continually move their fingers in case someone drives up behind the car. That will alert other drivers to call the police.

Teach your child to be smart, not scared. Practice these techniques to empower your child!

-- Adapted with permission from "Break the Car" by Bob Stuber
<http://www.bobstuber.com/> ■

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