

Stranger Danger and My Ex-Husband

Written by Kai Neighbors

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There are numerous ways to parent children I know, but what I witnessed last weekend left me horrified. I watched my ex-husband tell my 6-year-old son it was "ok" to go over a quarter of a mile through the park on his bicycle alone, unattended and completely out of sight.



Not only is this a giant distance for a kindergartener, it was around the backside of a school building and past a parking lot on an extremely busy Saturday morning. My son could have fallen, gotten hurt or even worse, kidnapped. So I did what I believe *most* parents would do, I ran after him. I made sure that he got to his destination safely and we both headed back towards the soccer field together. Along our way I had a long talk with him about strangers and the importance of going with an adult in the future.

Apparently my ex has a different outlook on this situation. He shrugged it off as though it was no big deal and furthermore explained that this was not the only time he has let my son go on this solo adventure. So my next question to him was, "Would you let him go to the other side of a grocery store all by himself?" The answer was no. Then how was this ok?

What he fails to realize is the frequency of childhood abductions in the US. According to Amber Alert, every forty seconds a child becomes missing or abducted and more than 700,000 go missing annually. Even more alarming, 20% of the children reported to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children in nonfamily abductions are not found alive. Does this scare you? I hope so. Your children can easily be taken right outside your own home, on their way to school or even in your neighborhood park.

So let's take a proactive approach as parents and educate our children and their caregivers on how to prevent these horrific situations from happening. You can find plenty of child safety, education and prevention publications on the [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's](#) website. I also urge you to sign up for [Amber Alert](#) messages sent directly to your phone.

Please remind your children to not talk to strangers, and never let them out of your sight.

xo Kai

With the summer shortly approaching, here are 10 ways to help keep your kids safe:

DON'T drop your children off at malls, movies, video arcades or parks as these are not safe places for children to be alone. Make sure a responsible adult is supervising younger children any time they are outside or away from home.

MAKE SURE children know their full name, address, telephone numbers and how to use the telephone.

BE SURE children know what to do in case of an emergency and how to reach you by phone. Children should have a neighbor or trusted adult they may call if they're scared or there's an emergency.

REVIEW the rules with your children about whose homes they may visit and discuss the boundaries of where they may and may not go in the neighborhood.

MAKE SURE children know to stay away from pools, creeks, or any body of water without adult supervision.

CAUTION children to keep the door locked and not to open it or talk to anyone who comes to the door when they are home alone.

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TEACH your children in whose vehicle they may ride. Children should be cautioned to never approach any vehicle, occupied or not, unless accompanied by a parent or other trusted adult.

BE SURE your children know their curfew and that they check in with you if they are going to be late. If children are playing outside after dark, make sure they wear reflective clothing and stay close to home.

CHOOSE babysitters with care. Obtain references from family, friends, and neighbors. Many states now have registries for public access to check criminal history or sex-offender status. Observe the babysitter's interaction with your children, and ask your children how they feel about the babysitter.

CHECK out camp and other summer programs before enrolling your children. See if a background screening check is completed on the individuals working with the children. Make sure there will be adult supervision of your children at all times, and make sure you are made aware of all activities and field trips offered by the camp or program.