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SAFETY TIPS FOR TEENS

Every 40 seconds a child is reported missing in the United States and it is estimated that every 2 minutes a child is sexually abused. According to the U. S. Department of Justice, 12-15 year olds are victimized at a rate of 84% higher than the general population. And, 61% of all rape victims are younger than 18. There are 3 types of child abduction: family, acquaintance and stranger abduction. For teenagers, acquaintance abduction is a bigger problem than stranger abduction and is more often associated with sexual and/or physical assault. The key to prevention is awareness. With that in mind, we have compiled this list of safety tips for teenagers.

- Be alert ~ remember that anyone can become a victim anytime, anywhere. No who and what is around you all the time. Talking on cell phones or listening to headphones makes you an easy target.
- Be confident ~ walking, standing, talking and carrying yourself with confidence tells criminals that you are not an easy target. Making eye contact scares off most attackers because they fear you will be able to identify them.
- Trust your feelings ~ your intuition is rarely wrong. If something doesn't feel right, it probably isn't. If you feel like you are being followed, cross the street and turn to walk in the opposite direction, being sure to get a good look at the person and then find the nearest place of safety and call the authorities.
- Be suspicious ~ in parking lots be aware of the cars parked on either side of your vehicle. If a male in a vehicle is sitting alone in the seat nearest your car, or if a van is parked next to your vehicle, enter your car from the opposite side. Before you get into your car, look inside, on the floor and in the back seat, to be sure that no one is hiding inside. Once you enter your car, lock the doors and leave the area. Do not talk on the phone or listen to the radio, it makes you a target. If a parking lot is dark or deserted, find a friend or security officer to accompany you to your car. Do not stop and talk to strangers in parking lots or help them into their vehicles, even if they appear to need help. Use elevators instead of stairs and stand close to the doorway and the controls. If you feel uncomfortable get off as quickly as possible. If you are attacked, push as many floor buttons as possible. When using public transportation, sit as close to the driver as possible or in the midst of groups of people, never isolate yourself. Stay awake and alert and keep packages in your lap or between your feet, never in an empty seat.
- Carry a cell phone in case of emergencies and to make sure someone knows where you are at all times. Also carry a whistle or personal safety alarm.
- Never carry a weapon. It only increases your chances of becoming seriously injured. Use everyday items as weapons of protection when necessary. (See attached list)
- Avoid carrying large sums of cash. Carry cash and other valuables in a front or inside pocket. Be discreet when using cash to reduce the attraction for muggers.
- Always travel on well-lit streets and avoid alleyways, shadowy doorways, shrubbery or anything that an attacker could hide behind. When possible, travel in groups or with at least one other person, following routes along busy streets so that there are always people around.
- If you are verbally harassed do not respond. Keep walking and notify the nearest authorities.
- Be fashionable but sensible ~ remember that clogs, high heels and tight skirts are hard to run and fight back in, and long scarves and long necklaces are easy to grab. Wear comfortable and practical clothing when traveling alone. You can always change into dress-up clothing when you arrive at your destination.
- Do not run away from home ~ try to resolve your problems by talking with your parents, other adults your trust or school counselors. If you need to leave an abusive situation, talk to counselors or seek the help of authorities, like the runaway hotline, who can put you somewhere safe and not out on the streets.

SELF DEFENSE TIPS FOR TEENS

- The most important thing, if you are attacked, is to keep calm. Becoming hysterical will not help and will give your attacker an added advantage.
- Stay alert and aware of your surroundings and your attacker. Get the most accurate and complete description of your attacker, their vehicle and the area as possible.
- Do not fight over material things. They can be replaced, but your life and limbs cannot.
- Draw as much attention to you and your situation as possible. Do not yell help. Most people will not respond. Yell, "FIRE", it will draw more attention and assistance.
- If you have a cell phone, call 911, drop the phone if you are being attacked and begin yelling. State your first name, your location, the license number of the attackers vehicle and any other information that you can. If your attacker reaches down to grab the phone, it will give you time to get away.
- Your elbow is the strongest point on your body, use it if you can to hit the attacker where it counts ~ the eyes, the knees, the throat or the groin. Remember that you are not trying to win a fight, you are just fighting back to buy yourself enough time to escape.
- If you are ever thrown into the trunk of a car, kick out the taillights and stick your arm out of the hole and start waving like crazy. The attacker will not be able to see you, but others will.
- If your hands are duct-taped together try to get the tape wet, it will lose its adhesiveness and will allow you to get your hands free.
- If an attacker has a gun and you can get away ~ RUN! Experts say that an attacker will only hit a running target 4 out of a 100 times, and even then, it isn't likely to hit a vital organ.
- Do not let an attacker take you to an abandoned area. Do whatever it takes and fight back.
- Use everyday objects you carry in your purse or backpack as weapons ~

Keys ~ Use them to gouge at eyes, to stab at the throat or to punch an attackers face. Place them between your fingers when you make a fist to add force.

Pencils, Pens, Rulers, Geographical Compasses, Protractors ~ Use these items just the way you would a key. They are just as effective to gouge eyes, stab the throat or to punch an attackers face.

High Heeled Shoes ~ Again, use them much the way you would a key. Aim the heel at the attackers eyes or to stab at their face or throat.

Hairspray or Breath spray ~ Spraying these items at close range in an attackers eyes can buy you valuable time to get away.

Spare Change ~ Use a handful of spare change and throw it forcefully at the face of an attacker to startle them and help you gain time to get away.

Can of Soda Pop ~ A shaken can of soda-pop sprayed at an attackers face will startle them and they will likely react by protecting their face with their hands, allowing you time to get away.

Your Bag ~ A full backpack or purse can also help you escape. You can throw it at the attacker or swing it to hit them and knock them off balance long enough to get away. You can also open it and begin throwing the contents at your attacker. You can also use the items inside to leave a trail if you are being abducted.