

empowering women eliminating racism



Parenting tips

As we all know, parents cannot always protect their children, but they can teach important safety guidelines. Whether the child is just learning to speak, attending middle school or going off to college, safety must come first.

Parents of college students

Safety Considerations in Selecting a College/University

- Evaluate the college or university security logs to learn whether the volume of crimes is high.
- Investigate whether drinking, drug and weapon laws are strictly enforced.
- Are bathroom doors in coed dorms secured with master locks for floor residents?
- Are doors and windows to the residence halls equipped with quality locks?
- Are potential students with a criminal history admitted to college?

College/University safety

Parents can advise their child to:

- Never give their keys or student IDs to anyone.
- Always lock cars and rooms, even in between their trips of moving in or out of their dorms.
- Keep valuables out of sight.
- Not compromise safety for a roommate who asks your teenager to leave the door unlocked.
- Familiarize themselves with the location of places they can run to in case of an emergency.
- Stick to well-lit and busy areas.
- Share their class and activity schedules with close friends.
- Trust their instincts.
- Remember that the buddy system applies to college as well as home.
- Use a shuttle system or other form of public transportation after dark.
- If possible, use cash machines during the day.
- Be careful who they let in or who follows them into their dorms.
- Always lock doors and first and second floor windows at night.
- Program cell phones with emergency numbers that include family and friends.
- Know the neighboring students on their floors.

Preventing sexual assault

Parents to Daughters:

- She should know that women who are drinking lose their ability to evaluate risks and recognize sexual signals.
- Tell your daughter to drink only from sealed containers that she opens herself – no drinks from punch bowls or glasses.
- She should never leave her drink unattended, because someone could add a drug to render her unconscious.
- She should stay out of isolated places.
- Stay in a group.
- Use reliable transportation. (Calling a cab is always an alternative)
- Tell a friend how long she plans to be and where she is going if she is going to spend time with a male alone.
- **She should know she has the right to refuse sexual advances.**

Parents to Sons:

- Advise your son that he cannot take advantage of any woman (or man) who has had too much to drink or is otherwise impaired.
- That drinking impairs both male and female judgment.
- **Male college students who are drinking lose their ability to interpret sexual signals.**

Parents of teenagers

- Keep the lines of communication open.
- Set clear rules and enforce them consistently.
- Don't be afraid to parent; know when to intervene.
- Know the warning signs of drug abuse, depression, suicide, cutting, gang involvement, and other serious problems.
- Discuss issues with teens rather than lecturing them. Although they are not adults, they needed to be spoken to in a more adult manner than when they were younger. Discussion, negotiation and understanding are needed.
- Make it clear that you as a parent will be there if your teenager needs you.
- Do you jump on every mistake your teen makes? Remember to point out your teen's positive traits. No one is perfect and no one messes up all of the time. And we all benefit from praise.
- Listen before you give advice. The most crucial moments in parenting are when your teenager is experiencing an emotion such as sadness, fear, anger, disappointment or embarrassment. First, help your child label the emotion, and validate how she feels. Then, and only then, suggest ways to solve the problem. That way, your child will be more likely come to you for help.
- Always include family time in your week.
- Use humor. Laughter is the best medicine maybe a cliché, but it's also true.
- Admit when you are wrong.

Preventing sexual assault, cont.

Parents of young children

- Know where your children are.
- Be alert to adults or older children who greet your child regularly. Know his or her friends.
- Know your babysitter
- Be alert to anyone who is focusing an unusual amount of attention to your child or yourself.
- Establish rules, such as your child should always let you know where he or she is going and about any changes in the plans.
- Don't let them go out alone; there is safety in numbers.
- Don't leave your child unattended in a car, a shopping mall game center or anywhere.
- Teach your children to be on the lookout for situations, actions and people who make them feel uncomfortable.
- Make sure your child knows never to walk away with anyone without first telling the person in charge.
- Tell your child to avoid talking to people they don't know when you're not around.
- Tell your child to avoid public restrooms unless they are with a trusted adult.
- Don't have your child wear clothing or carry backpacks and other articles with their names on them.
- Talk calmly to your children about safety. Try to instill caution rather than fear in them.
- Tell them that a stranger might not necessarily be scary or creepy. He or she can look like your friends and teachers.
- Use teachable moments to reinforce safety. If an incident occurs in your community, remind your children about what they could do if they were involved in a similar situation.
- Make sure your children know who they can turn to for help if you are not available.
- Practice what you talk about; go over scenarios and ask your children what they would do.
- Instruct your child not to accept rides from anyone they do not know.
- Advise them to run to a safe place or yell if someone tries to take them by force.
- Always carry updated pictures of your children. On the back, write their age, hair and eye colors, height and weight, clothing and shoe sizes, distinguishing body marks and the date the picture was taken.
- Take fingerprints of each child.

Preventing violence

- Don't expose your children to violence in your home.
- Talk to boys about positive and appropriate behavior before they build relationships with girls.
- Help a young child learn to stop his or her negative behavior before hurting someone.
- Use early intervention in cases of aggressive behavior.
- Monitor their television and movie choices to avoid media that depicts violence and revenge as admirable ways to resolve problems.
- Don't keep guns in the house.
- If you are a single mother, seek a long-term male role model for your children.

Preventing abuse

- Advise your children that their body is their own. Talk to them about areas that should be covered (swimsuit areas.)
- Explain that no one has the right to touch those areas and encourage them to tell you if someone does.
- Tell them to come to you if someone shows them pictures or takes pictures of private parts.
- Tell them to come to you if someone talks to them about sex or walks in on them in the bathroom.
- Tell them to tell you even if the touching seemed accidental.
- Provide a list of ideas that someone might use to try to get them to keep a secret, such as candy, money, threats and punishment.
- Reassure them that no harm will come to them or their family and friends if they tell you.
- Teach your child that some secrets should never be kept, such as when an abuser threatens or insists the child keep the secret.
- Teach your children that some secrets should never be kept even if an abuser tries to convince them that will think it is their fault or won't believe them.
- Encourage your child to talk anytime he or she feels uncomfortable, confused or scared.
- With your child, pick three adults in their lives that they can turn to if you as a parent are not available.
- Be alert to any changes in your child's behavior.

General tips for all parents

- **Control anger.** A parent is really a child's best teacher. The way a parent expresses anger has a strong bearing on how a child handles the emotion. Parents should not use anger to hurt, belittle and insult their children or spouses. Children need to see that when people are mad, there are ways to express their feelings that don't hurt.
- **Control your own anger.** There are times when a parent's patience wears thin and his or her coping skills waiver. Take a moment to cool off, count to 10, take a deep breath or put your hands in your pockets to help you to resist the urge to use them to threaten or hit the child.
- **Apologize.** If you respond to your child's anger with your own anger, which sometimes happens, apologize. In this way, you are teaching your child how to apologize.
- **Find support.** Find a support system, either an informal network of friends or a formal parental support group. Share parenting tips and strategies and boost each other's spirits in the process.
- **Ban bad-mouthing.** Kids aren't born to hate -- they learn it. Refuse to allow name-calling of any kind. Tell your child to use words to express how he or she is feeling instead of using hurtful language. Help children talk about their feelings, give them a name for their feelings.
- **Dangerous behavior.** This should always be countered with a firm and swift parental response. Children need to learn their limits for safety sakes.
- **What to do.** It's okay to be angry, but it's not okay to hurt. When a child starts getting angry, a parent should appeal to the child's sense of what is right, ignore minor misbehavior and show affection when your child gets frustrated. Clearly define limits and consistently enforce them. Your best strategy is not to take everything your child says personally. Let your child's hurtful words roll off.
- **Encourage Conversation.** It's important to establish and maintain good communication with your child. In today's complex world, it should be a priority to set aside time to talk to your child, no topic is too small to discuss. Taking time to talk with and listen to your child every day will help create a stronger bond between you and your child.
- **Set a good example.** Young children do not have prior knowledge or skills, and so they eagerly look for someone to imitate. That "someone" is usually one or both of their parents. Parents are a child's first role models. A child will learn good manners, healthy eating habits and respect for other more easily when it is a part of their daily life. Be aware of the things you do and say in the presence of your child. It is important to remember that learning is not something that happens exclusively within the walls of school. Probably the most common mistake moms and dads make is that we say one thing and do another. For example, we give our children lectures on self-control and patience, and then explode when we get caught in traffic.
- **Get involved in your child's education.** Parental involvement and influence can positively contribute to a child's success in school. Provide a quiet and comfortable learning environment for your child in the home while he or she is doing homework. Encourage progress in school by showing interest in your child's schoolwork. Make an effort to attend teacher-parent conferences. If the scheduling of conferences conflicts with your work schedule, speak to the teacher and principal about your situation and work out a time when you can meet.
- **Value what you have.** Teach your children to value their belongings and to attach their imaginations to what they have rather than to an unquenchable obsession with more, more, more.
- **Monitor online access.** There is no doubting the tremendous benefits the Internet brings to your family. While online, Web surfing can open a world of possibilities for children, expanding their horizons and exposing them to different cultures and ways of life. To ensure that your child's experience on the Internet is a safe one, parents should check their child's Web site activity, spend time with your child on the computer and put the computer in a place that can be easily accessed by the entire family. If you decide to use software that will block or restrict your child's access to certain websites, discuss this decision with your child so that he or she will understand why it is necessary.