

STRANGER DANGER AND BULLYING PREVENTION CLASS

Stranger Danger

Key Messages for kids from the Instructor Group

- A stranger is “someone you do not know”.
- Most strangers are nice, normal people, but a few may not be.
- Do not to listen to a stranger—rather move away or back inside.
- Never go with a stranger—no matter what the stranger says.
- Explain that strangers may make up sad stories, like looking for a lost pet, needing help with a sick child, or needing directions. Refer to Point.
- Strangers may offer treats, gifts or lollies for ‘helping’. Refer to point.
- Ensure an adult they trust knows where they are at all times.
- If they must walk somewhere by themselves then walk near busier roads/streets.
- If ever frightened then go into a ‘safe place’ like a shop, police station or school.

There are also safe strangers. These people are teachers, police officers, firefighters and other adults who work with children. They might know these people only by sight, not personally.

Context for Instructors

Kids see strangers every day in stores, in the park, and in their neighbourhoods. Most of these strangers are normal people, but a few may not be. Parents and associations like FMA can help to protect children from dangerous strangers by teaching them about strangers and suspicious behaviour. Parents can also be taught to take a few precautions of their own.

- **Defining “Stranger.”**

The simplest definition of a stranger is “someone you do not know.” Children need to know this definition, but they also need to know about “safe” strangers. Safe strangers are teachers, police officers, firefighters and other adults who work with children.

Emphasize the importance of seeking help from these safe strangers in public places. It's never a good idea to enter the home of a stranger alone.

Parents may wish to advise their children who they can ask for help in certain situations. For example, if they get dropped at soccer practice then the parent may say:

- “Look for John’s mom if you need anything.”
- “Stay by the playground until I can pick you up. I will be here right at 5:30.”
- “Go see Coach if there are any problems”.
- “Stay with Coach until I arrive if I’m running late”.

Helping children identify safe strangers gives them an important tool.

Keep ‘danger’ in balance. While being alert and pro-active with protective behaviours, remember that a child’s world is full of safe, wonderful and positive events

- **Other Strategies for Parents**

- **Stay close in crowds.**

When out in a crowded public place, parents should encourage their children to stay close to them. Small children like to run and explore. Parents should set clear expectations for staying together and explain the danger of wandering away. For example, ask children to hold the stroller if walking with new borns. Send older children to accompany young ones if exploring other parts of the store. The chance of a child being taken in these situations is slim but sticking together helps everyone be safe.

- **Follow your instincts.**

One of the most important things parents can teach their children is to be aware of their feelings about situations and strangers. They can teach them to watch out for adults who ask them for help, invite them to come into their home or car, ask them to keep a secret or exhibit other suspicious behaviour. By teaching them to follow their gut feelings, parents are empowering them to make good decisions. Parents must remind them to tell if an adult ever makes them feel uncomfortable.

- **Safety in numbers**

It is much safer for children to be in a group if they are unsupervised by adults. Parents should look to find a friend for their child to walk to school with if possible. Don't send them outside to play or to a park by themselves. Encourage them to watch out for their friends as well. There is safety in numbers.

- **Establish good family rules.**

Parents should establish and emphasise sound family rules including:

- never accept a ride from a stranger.
- make sure a parent knows where their children are at all times.
- do not reveal personal information to strangers (including online); and
- keep the door locked and don't answer it if home alone.

Parents should review these rules periodically, so their children are aware of them. Role-playing situations where they might have to make tough decisions will help them internalize the family's rules for safety.

Another tip is for parents to share a code word with their children that is easy for them to remember and assure them that only a trusted adult will know the code word that they both shares.

- **No, Go, Yell, Tell.**

These four words are part of the National Crime Prevention Council's [advice to parents](#) for teaching children about strangers. This phrase teaches children to yell "No!" if approached by strangers, run away quickly, yell for help and tell a trusted adult what happened. Even young children can learn these four words and what to do.

Most children will grow up without having any trouble with strangers, but it's best to be prepared. Instructors can support this process by teaching children to be aware of the people around them and follow basic safety rules. Doing this will help them have confidence to know how to keep themselves safe.

Bullying Prevention

Bullying is an ongoing misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that causes physical and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power over one or more person. Social exclusion is also a common form of bullying.

It is not a one-off event. The term “bullying” can be misused so make sure it actually is bullying that we are talking about.

FOR PARENTS

Tips to help your child who is being bullied.

(Written from the perspective of instructing the parents)

You need to consider what you know about your child and the details of the situation to make the best decision for your child.

Let your child know that you will take the bullying seriously and that you can help them to report it to the school.

- [Stay calm and positive](#)
 - It can be upsetting when your child is being bullied. It might be necessary to draw on your own networks to get support for yourself while you are helping your child. Focus on identifying a solution with your child. Your attitude will be reflected in your child. A confident, positive and resilient appearance can stop bullying from continuing.
 - Sometimes children don't want their parents to become involved and are afraid of the consequences if they tell you and the person who is doing the bullying finds out.
 - You should contact the school immediately if your child's safety is at risk.
- [Talk with your child](#)
 - Discuss strategies with your child and set a short period of time to see if they can resolve the situation if they want to try to deal with the bullying themselves.
 - Encourage your child:
 - *to walk away*
 - *to try to act unimpressed or unaffected.*
 - *to use other strategies to diffuse the situation (e.g. agreeing in an offhand way with the bullying when they say offensive or negative things – known as fogging)*
 - to say 'No!' firmly
 - to talk to the teacher or other staff, e.g., school guidance officer.
- If the bullying continues or increases, contact the school.
- Encourage your child to talk about what happened. Tell your child that reporting the bullying is okay. Assure your child that it is NOT their fault.
- Help your child to learn new ways to relate to the other child.
- Talk to your child about acting confidently even when they do not feel it.

- Practice strategies with your child to help them to:
 - stand and walk in a way that appears more confident;
 - give a quick reply to surprise or disarm the other child; and
 - use a routine response (e.g. okay, whatever) that implies that the child is not bothered.
- [Do not advise your child to fight with the other child.](#)
Fighting (as distinct from defending themselves from a physical attack) with the other child can escalate the situation, and your child may be reprimanded for their part in a fight.
- [Report the bullying to the school](#)
Let them know that you will also report it to the school.
- [Seek help for your child to improve his/her social skills](#)
The strategies mentioned above for dealing with bullying also apply to dealing with cyberbullying. You can teach your child how to be safe online, as well as supervising and restricting access to technology.

FOR CHILDREN

Tips to help the child who is being bullied.

- [Tell someone](#)
 - Tell your Mum or Dad, one of your family, a grandparent, teacher, friend or someone else who you think will listen to you. Ask them to help you work out what to do.
 - Tell a teacher. It doesn't matter where it happens - in school, out of school or online, teachers want to stop bullying when they know about it.
 - If bullying is happening on your phone or the internet, keep messages and posts that hurt you or write down what happened and show an adult.
- [Stay positive - be confident.](#) Think about positive things:
 - what you like doing at school and away from school
 - what you are good at
 - the people who like you and care about you.
- Try some things yourself:
 - Tell the other person 'I don't like that'.
 - Use a strong and confident voice. Even if you don't feel strong and confident, fake it!
 - Talk with the person who is bullying you (if you think it's a safe thing to do)
 - Ask them if there is a problem that you might be able to sort out together. If you feel too scared to do it alone, ask a friend to come with you.
 - If possible, ignore the person bullying you.
 - When they're ignored, kids who bully often lose interest. If that doesn't work, tell someone and ask for their help.
 - Don't try to get back at the person who bullies you. It usually doesn't work, and you can end up in trouble too.
 - Hang around people who help you feel good about yourself
 - Friends do not bully you. They care about you and are fun to be around. You might also make new friends by caring about others.
- [If it happens on the phone or internet:](#)
 - do not respond to the message.

- tell your Mum or Dad, one of your family, a grandparent, teacher, friend or someone else who can help you work out what to do.
- ask for help to put a block on your mobile device (iPod Touch, iPad, phone) or social networking page so you don't get the bullying posts or texts.
- visit *What can I do if I'm being bullied?* on the [National Centre Against Bullying website](#).