

Self Defence Discussion Topics for Parents

Today in the self-defence session we discussed strangers and bullies. However, as the session was quite short we only touched on this very large topic. Some parents may already have discussed these kinds of topics with their children, but for those that haven't I have compiled this document as a starting point. The points are in no particular order and some deal with bullies and some abductors. Also note that some of the points may seem quite obvious, but sometimes the obvious needs to be pointed out.

The points are only meant as a prompt and tips for a discussion and not to be a concise list of considerations. Some of the points are suggested actions for the children and others are for the parents/carers.

When discussing or practising these tips present a realistic situation that might arise, such as you being a stranger and approaching your child to see how your child will react. NEVER put your child down if he or she makes a mistake, but correct them in a positive way to reinforce their understanding of what you are trying to teach them. Seek feedback from your child. It is recommended that you review all of this information with your child at least once every three to six months. It makes an excellent weekend family project and shouldn't take a great deal of your time. Kids also enjoy the role playing aspect of their education. Make it fun for everyone involved.

The topics

- What is a stranger?
- The special code.
- Children should learn to trust their instincts
- The buddy system
- Children defending themselves
- H.E.L.P your child not to be a victim
- Profile of a chosen victim
- Success in Self-Defence and self image
- Developing awareness skills
- Join a martial arts class

Finally. Please accept my apologies if I have mistakenly sent home lots of a mini Bruce Lee wannabes. If you would like to discuss any self defence topics then please free to email me at info@shiro-bara.co.uk or by post at the below address.

Kind regards,

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Shiro Bara Self Defence

**Realistic
Knowledge**

**Physical
Skills**

What is a stranger?

STRANGERS:

What is a stranger? Most people would agree that a stranger is a person you don't know. When we educate our children, almost all parents tell their children not to talk to strangers. But think about this for a moment. If your child gets lost and needs help, isn't it all right for them to ask a police officer for assistance? When your child attends the first day of school and enters a new classroom, isn't it all right for your child to converse with the new teacher? If the teacher asks your child their name, and they answer without a second thought, isn't your child talking to a stranger? These are interesting questions that need to be addressed.

Most parents want their children to grow up being polite, respectful and friendly to other people. Often the abductor will approach the child and begin initiating seemingly innocent contact. The approach is usually subtle and the abductor tries to get to know the child, and even become their friend. Parents should be alert to the possibility that this is happening, and the child should be made aware of this type of deceit.

PERSON IN AUTHORITY:

You don't want your child growing up thinking that ALL strangers are bad people. Some of your best friends were once strangers, weren't they? There are some strangers who are there to help your child should they need assistance, such as a police officer, a security guard at a shopping centre, a teacher or school official, a school crossing attendant, the manager of a department store or the counter person at a fast food establishment. Given certain situations and circumstances, a person who is in a position to help your child is referred to as a PERSON IN AUTHORITY.

The special code

The SPECIAL CODE is a secret word or phrase that ONLY you and your immediate family knows. If your child is approached by a stranger and is told that you've been in an accident and had asked this individual to come and pick them up, your child should take three large steps away from the individual and ask the person for the SPECIAL CODE.

If the person does not IMMEDIATELY know the correct SPECIAL CODE, your child should QUICKLY run away from this person as fast as they can and seek help from a PERSON IN AUTHORITY. Make sure that your child understands to run away in the opposite direction.

Children should learn to trust their instincts

As a parent you learn to trust your instincts. There is no reason why a child can't be taught to trust their instincts at a young age. They should be taught that if something doesn't feel right, to go with those thoughts and avoid the situation. This is especially true in situations where they are made to feel uncomfortable. A child should be taught that it is NOT OK for another person to touch them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable, even if it's an adult. It's ok to say "no" in certain circumstances.

The buddy system

It's not enough that you are watching out for your children. While shopping it's easy to momentarily distracted and take your eyes off your children. By teaching your children the BUDDY SYSTEM, they are instructed, in essence, to keep an eye out for you. If they see that you aren't in view, they are instructed to bring it to your attention. It's a way for your child to learn good PROACTIVE skills and to re-enforce your awareness skills as well.

An example of the buddy system being used would be where an adult asks a child to follow them to a room. If the child feels uneasy about this then they should ask if their buddy could accompany them. If the adult asking the child to follow is responsible they will realise that the child feels uncomfortable with the situation and either accept the accompanying buddy or redefine the request. This is a common situation in schools. However, if the adult does not wish a buddy to accompany then your child should treat the adult as a bad stranger and run away.

Children defending themselves

The best defence your child can have in an attempted abduction situation is to run.

If your son or daughter is eight years old, do you REALLY want them going toe-to-toe with a 250 lb. man aiming to toss your child into a vehicle? The last thing you want your child doing is trying to do any type of self-defence technique that would force them to stay in close proximity to the abductor. It's one thing if your child is grabbed in a hold, such as a wrist grab, and delivers a kick to the knee of the attacker. It's another thing for your child to stand there and attempt to try and take the attacker out of commission with a roundhouse kick he or she learned in a karate class. This discourages your child from running away from the situation. The sheer size and strength of the abductor makes sticking around a poor defence.

- Run away from the attacker.

An adult, if they want to, can cover a distance of about 21 feet in one second. Just this fact alone should suggest that the greater distance a child can place between them and the abductor, the better off they will be.

Although it sounds obvious you must stress to them the run in the OPPOSITE direction of the attacker.

H.E.L.P. Your child not to be a victim

H.E.L.P is a way to teach your child to be safe and avoid being a victim of child abduction.

- (H) - HAVE an escape plan.
- (E) - EVALUATE your options.
- (L) - LOCATE a safe place.
- (P) - PREPARE yourself.

(H) - HAVE AN ESCAPE PLAN:

HAVE an escape plan in place with your child. Discuss with them what to do in case of an emergency. Make sure that your child knows how to use the telephone to dial 999. Make sure that your child always carries enough change with him or her to make a telephone call in case of emergency. HAVE several safe locations nearby where your child can go in case of an emergency, such as a relative's or neighbours home. Discuss the escape plan with friends and family members.

(E) - EVALUATE YOUR OPTIONS:

Your child should be taught to quickly assess the situation they are in and EVALUATE all of the options that might present themselves. One of the best ways to teach your child this skill is through role-playing. Present a variety of situations to them and see how well they EVALUATE the situation and whether they choose the best available option for the particular situation. This will hone their decision-making skills and enhance their awareness skills. They should be taught and encouraged to be clever and create their own options and opportunities if at all possible. Remember to educate your child to the fact that situations quickly change and so do their options.

(L) - LOCATE A SAFE PLACE:

LOCATE safe places your child can go in any situation. Teach them to run into a department store or fast food establishment and locate a PERSON IN AUTHORITY to help them if they are being followed. This might also include a sports centre, YMCA, church, library or even an office building. They should know where their friends and relatives live.

(P) - PREPARE YOURSELF:

Your child should always remain mentally and physically PREPARED to deal with and escape from any situation that might arise. They should be encouraged to look for opportunities to escape that might suddenly present themselves.

- Run away from strangers.

Running away from a stranger or a bad situation is always their first and best line of defence.

Profile of a chosen victim

Jessica is a sweet little girl who walks to school by herself everyday. She is shy and looks down at the ground as she walks, oblivious to the people or situations around her. She takes small steps and looks like she might be lost.

Whether Jessica is a fictitious character, or your child, this example of her pattern of behaviour is a profile of a victim.

CHOOSING A LIKELY VICTIM:

I'm not telling you this so that your child becomes a likely victim. I'm emphasising to you and your child of how NOT to be a victim. If you understand what a victim IS, then you can transform your child into what a victim ISN'T.

WHAT TO DO TO AVOID BEING A VICTIM:

Your child should walk with his or her head up, taking large forward steps. They should look ahead of them and notice what's there. They should always look (or appear to look) like they know where they are going.

An abductor or attacker is always looking for an easy victim. If your child is PERCEIVED to be an easy victim, he or she is more likely to BE a victim. That sounds very simplistic, and it is! Teach your child to be more assertive. Teach them to walk and carry themselves WITH AUTHORITY.

What should your child do if someone gets in his or her face?

Your child would most likely do one of three choices available to him or her:

1. Fight back.
2. Retreat.
3. Stand there and do nothing.

When someone gets "IN THEIR FACE" and your child can't make a decision as to what he or she will do, your child will be in trouble.

Teach your child to make a decision AHEAD OF TIME what they would "actually" do if someone got IN THEIR FACE. It is always better to be prepared for a particular situation than to be caught unprepared. Be proactive.

Teaching your child to have an idea ahead of time might allow them to quickly assess the situation BEFORE it gets out of hand.

Your child should ALWAYS be alerted to their surroundings and their situation, taking advantage of any opportunity that might present itself.

Success in Self-Defence and self-image What can teachers and parents do about it?

Teachers and counsellors are well aware that each child builds a self-image. Each child looks within and pictures himself or herself as succeeding or failing. While the tendency is to see oneself as static, unchanging, and set in stone, in reality the image we have of ourselves is not even close to what really is the case. The growth of this self-image can be redirected and accelerated by the individual himself. Each individual can build his or her own self-confidence and self-esteem, but teachers and parents can do a lot to accelerate the process. Because those who seek out children are cowards, they search for children who appear to be an easy target, just as do the bullies of the playground. One of the biggest weapons we have to prevent these kinds of attacks is to develop the kind of self-image that shouts the fact that we are confident in our ability to handle problems and, if necessary, to thwart an attack.

A feeling of being a successful person has a reciprocal relationship to self image, and therefore, to personal safety. George Bernard Shaw said, "Success covers a multitude of blunders."

Self-image is like a tree. It grows from both internal and external influences. If a tree is scrawny and stunted, water and light will not produce the same kind of growth that it does from a healthy, robust sapling. Just so, the self-image for success will grow faster in some than in others with the same external stimulation. For success, the individual must choose external stimulation (or activity) that nurtures a strong, positive self-image that will be projected to others. Some things teachers and parents can do to help children to be safer are listed below:

1. **CHOOSING A GOAL:** Children may choose several goals to work on, but not too many goals to start. If a child wants to play a musical instrument, help him or her select the instrument carefully and to practice for success. Parents should encourage such activities but not expect a young Mozart to develop overnight. A goal is just that -- something to strive for through diligence and hard work. Students should be encouraged to get good grades; but if a child decides for himself or herself that he or she should be getting all "A's" and "B's" or act in a school play, that is so much better, because that motivation which is strongest is that which comes from within oneself. Teach kids to choose and focus on the goal or goals!

2. **SET DAILY AND OTHER SHORT-TERM OBJECTIVES:** A goal is like a star or total victory. We may never achieve our goals completely, but each day we can move closer. A child's daily objectives move him or her in the right direction. If the goal is to learn a foreign language, a boy or girl can set a DAILY objective; for example, "To pronounce correctly twenty proper names." tomorrow, the objective might be, "Learning how to use some common verbs." Daily objective(s) will carry a child closer to the achievement of his or her goals. Children need to be taught to set these short-term goals rather than seeking to reach an ultimate goal all at once. The latter approach can lead to the child being overwhelmed by the amount of work that needs to be done to reach the ultimate goal. The negative thoughts likely to follow would be counter-productive to the objective of increasing the child's self-image. Fear of failure adds unwanted pressure.

3. **TEACH CHILDREN TO FOCUS THEIR ENERGIES.** If the child's goal is to make more money next year in a part time job, he or she will need to concentrate his or her energies and direct them toward moneymaking. The child will have to set a daily goal of getting to the job on time, and will need to realize that he or she will have to miss some shows, and books will lie unread. The child may not achieve a goal of £100,000, but he or she certainly will get closer if he or she realizes the need to focus his or her energies and to exert willpower to **KEEP FOCUSED!**

4. **TEACH CHILDREN TO CHOOSE SUCCESSFUL TECHNIQUES:** Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn chose a bent spoon to dig a tunnel under an imagined prison wall. After a few blisters (and minimal earth displacement) they finally decided they could use a spade and just pretend it was a bent spoon. With a chosen goal, defined objectives, and focused energy, teach children to choose techniques and strategies that will advance them steadily toward their goals. For example, one brash 15 year old self-defence student finished her first month of training and immediately set out to sell herself as an instructor in self-defence at a local Recreation and Parks Centre employment office. Another young student decided while he was in middle school that he wanted to be a teacher. His own teacher helped him to choose the strategy of setting short-term, realistic objectives. He volunteered to put in extra time helping teachers of children with disabilities at the neighbouring elementary school. When he graduated from high school he entered a teacher training program at a nearby university. He reached his goals and truly was a success. Kids need to be taught to set short-term objectives and activities that will take them step by step toward their goal.

5. **TEACH CHILDREN TO ENJOY WORK.** People can control their state of mind. Unfortunately, too many people, children and adults, do control it, but in the wrong way. Parents and teachers need to avoid grouching, grumbling, fussing, and complaining about the work they have to do! Set the right example. Children will model it! Teach children to be happy as they work. Teach children that they should not postpone all of their enjoyment until the job is complete. Yes, we control our state of mind. We all have to learn to enjoy our work. Teach children to reward themselves with the satisfaction of success! Teach them to smile! A smile on one's face can reach deep into the unconscious mind and work wonders!

6. **PRACTICE!** "Practice makes perfect," so they say. But if practice never quite achieves perfection, it does move you closer to your chosen goal. Whether you practice scoring goals, a martial arts techniques, playing Hamlet, tracking pulsars, or skinning a fish, your repeated experiences lead toward your goal. If a child has to give an oral report, they should practice before a mirror. If possible, they should practice it in the same place where she will give it. She must make that place her own, her home field. They should practice in front of a critical friend. A child should be taught that he or she should shoot baskets or kick goals for hours if he or she wants to make the team. Parents can suggest that he or she could set up an audience of teddy bears. A sixty year old woman with multiple sclerosis enrolled in a jujitsu self-defence program at a local sports centre. Through diligent practice, determination and hard work, and a variety of coloured belt ranks, today, she holds a black belt! She never gave up. Teach children to practice and to hang in there for success! **NEVER SURRENDER!**

7. TEACH CHILDREN TO MEASURE THEIR PROGRESS. If one achieves daily objectives and moves a little closer to a chosen goal, he or she should know it. Knowledge of progress will serve as a reward for accomplishment. His or her achievements (and what has been learned) would be "reinforced", as B.F. Skinner and Edwin Thorndike put it. Any self-made record of their progress will do. Usually, the child can keep a simple chart. Each day's progress should be added to the record. An uncomplicated line graph would do. The simpler the better. It may sound silly, but it works! Whatever a child does, from hopscotch, to brain surgery, his or her progress should be measured. The child should see success in a tangible form and be happy! Remember to reward (reinforce) the child. He or she deserves it, and the result will be an improved self-image.

8. TEACH CHILDREN TO REVISE TECHNIQUES AND PRESS ON. As the child measures and evaluates his or her progress toward a chosen goal, and continuous practice, the child will find techniques that could be more effective. Psychological research shows that people will move faster and faster the closer they come to their goals. Teach children to select the best techniques available, to revise techniques and strategies following measurement and evaluation. finally, teach children to persevere. The results will be well worth the effort.

So, we are saying that children have to be taught the techniques we've just discussed. The results will be an enhanced self-image, which in turn, will lead to greater and greater success and self-confidence. That self-confidence will be obvious to others, and the result will be greater safety for your child or student.

Developing awareness skills

A person can increase their chances of NOT being a victim by heightening their sense of awareness. To do this, you must change from being REACTIVE to PROACTIVE in your approach to everything that you do.

It's unfortunate but many times a person becomes a victim of circumstance BEFORE they realise that the original problem could have been avoided in the first place. They force themselves into a position of having to REACT to a situation.

For example, a man sitting in a car rolls down the window and calls your child over to ask him a question. Your child unwittingly walks over to the car and is instantly in a compromising position. He is forced to quickly run away from the stranger before the stranger has the opportunity to get out of his vehicle and chase him down. In this example, the child's heightened sense of awareness should take over and instincts should tell the child that he feels uncomfortable even listening to this stranger and turns around and runs in the other direction without hesitation.

Your child should always take a PROACTIVE approach to any potential situation. The more your child realizes this fact and is taught to think in a PROACTIVE manner, the better off your child will be.

Here are some specific things that you or your child SHOULD NOT do:

1. Don't allow your child to wander around a restaurant or fast food establishment unattended.
2. Don't allow yourself to be side tracked while dining out or shopping.
3. Don't allow your child to hang around public toilets unattended and for any length of time.
4. Don't leave a child unattended in a vehicle for any reason.
5. Don't force or encourage your child to sit on anyone's lap for which they even appear to be uncomfortable or uneasy.
6. Don't disregard anything your child might say about someone just because they are a friend of relative of yours. Listen to what your child has to say with an open mind.
7. Don't allow your child to wear pieces of clothing, such as shirts, hats and jackets with their name printed on the outside. It's confusing to your child to have a stranger call their name out and appear to be a friend or acquaintance.
8. Don't allow your child to wear a house key around their neck. It is a sure sign that no one is home at that child's house.

Finally, why not join a martial arts class?

By simply joining a martial arts class your child will grow in many ways. They will learn a few techniques to help them break away from bullies or strangers. They will become stronger. Their awareness of situations will grow. Most importantly though, their confidence will grow and when they appear more confident they will be happier and will be less vulnerable, which I know is what I want for my three boys.