

Hello!

Although there is a lot of violence in modern society, there is plenty we can do to minimize the odds of it happening to our children. Can a parent take every precaution possible to keep his family safe and still have his child suffer violence? Of course. However, with the right preparation, the right training and the right mindset, the odds will be strongly stacked in your child's favor.

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure certainly applies to keeping our families safe. *SchoolSafe*, *StreetSafe* will help you train your child in strategic self-defense to feel more confident and empowered. Your child will communicate more confidence in the way she carries herself. Because bullies and predators usually approach children who appear vulnerable, hesitant or fearful, they will be less likely to single out your confident, empowered child.

There are conflicting theories as to when parents should begin to discuss real-world dangers with their children or if the topic should even be broached.

My take is that real-world dangers need to be discussed, but that the discussion should be age appropriate and introduced over time.

The overriding theme should be empowerment-based education not fear-based education. If you keep your child in the dark regarding safety issues, she can grow up naïve and be easy prey for predators. Whereas, if your consistent message is to “beware of strangers because there are a lot of bad people out there that want to hurt you,” your child could grow up being overly fearful. This fear does not make your child safer. In fact, being overly fearful puts her more at risk.

The key is to discuss real-world, age-appropriate dangers in a calm, matter-of-fact fashion. Explain to your child that while there are bad guys out there, the majority of people they meet are good—but to be safe, there are certain guidelines that they should always follow.

Happy parenting!

Dave Kovar

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## Your Most Important Role

The most important role you will ever have is that of parent. Parenting can be extremely rewarding, but it's extremely challenging, too. Just when you think you have it figured out, something happens and it's back to the drawing board.

Ben Zoma, an early spiritual sage, often asked his students, "Who is a brave person?" Zoma described "a brave person" as "someone who is smart enough to be afraid, but does whatever needs to be done anyway."

To me, "being afraid" means that certain things are to be taken seriously. Parenthood is a real responsibility. Like it or not, we're responsible for helping to shape our child's life. We should not take this lightly.

Sow a thought, reap an action.

Sow an action, reap a habit.

Sow a habit, reap a character.

Sow a character, reap a destiny.

The above quote, attributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson, is one of my favorites. First and foremost, a parent's job is to do his best to raise his child to become a confident, healthy, happy and contributing member of society. And, in order to do this, parents need to help their children think in proactive, positive ways and develop strong self-images that will guide them through rough times.

The following Parenting Guidelines are designed to support your and your child's success.

You have probably heard most of these guidelines before. Most of them are common sense. However, knowing what to do and understanding how to do it are often two separate challenges.

*SchoolSafe, StreetSafe* unites the “what” with the “how” for a logical, easy-to-use guide to parenting.

As you read, you might think that I’m exaggerating the importance of being positive with your child. Guilty as charged! In my experience of working with thousands of parents over the course of more than thirty years, rarely have I come across parents who are too positive with their children. I have, however, frequently seen parents spend way too much time criticizing and being negative with their children. At the other end of this spectrum, though more rare, are parents who believe their children can do no wrong. Both approaches are off kilter.

*SchoolSafe, StreetSafe* teaches positive, logical and effective parenting and communication skills in an intuitive format so that you will be able to begin to apply them immediately.

We’re all busy. Even with the best of intentions, days or weeks might slip by in which we haven’t used any of our parenting tools. If these tools make sense to you, you might try calendaring them into your phone or computer, even setting the alarm clock on your phone as a reminder or writing yourself notes placed in strategic locations.

## Family Safety Principle 1 - Create Safe Habits

While most of us know how to live a safe life, we're not always aware of what we know. As parents, it is important to be conscious of what we know and to teach our children to be mindful, too. Awareness is the first step to safety.

To keep your family safe doesn't require that you lock them in the house and not let them out. On the contrary! Once you're aware of what you know about staying safe and put this simple knowledge into action, you will be giving your family more freedom than ever.

You create safe habits by doing what you know you should do. You help your child to create safe habits by teaching her to avoid potentially dangerous situations in the first place.

### Description

Years ago, a man walked into my martial arts school to ask about lessons. He was sporting a black eye, stitches and a fat lip. It was pretty obvious that he'd been in a fight and wanted to learn to protect himself.

He told me quite candidly that he needed to learn self-defense. When I asked him why, he said that every time he went into this certain bar, he got into a fight. I responded, half jokingly, by telling him not to go to the bar in the first place. He literally slapped himself on the forehead and, with a startled look, said, "I never thought of that. What a great idea!" To me, this seemed obvious but, until I mentioned it, he had never thought of avoiding the potential for danger.

You'll be surprised how much you know already about safe habits. The following examples illustrate this point:

- Wear a seat belt
- Lock the car and house doors
- Get cash inside a store, not at an outside automated teller
- Fill up on gas in a good area of town during the day

- Shop with a friend
- Park in well lit areas
- When shopping, park as close as possible to the store with your car door facing the store

Pretty basic stuff that every adult should know, right? Do you follow these rules? Remember that creating safe habits doesn't mean you are being paranoid but that you are being smart and stacking the odds for safety in your favor.

Once you realize how much about safety you already know and recommit yourself to practicing safe habits, teach your child to do the same thing. Again, teaching your child to create safe habits requires an ongoing conversation. A one-time discussion isn't enough. Discuss the importance of avoiding potentially dangerous situations with your child frequently. The Socratic method works best. Teach your child by asking questions rather than by lecturing her.

### **Tool 1: Talk to your child about potentially dangerous situations**

Here's the big question—what potentially dangerous situations do you need to keep your child from getting into in the first place? Ask your child to name some dangerous situations that she should avoid. Your questions can guide her to discover the following scenarios and more.

Next, ask your child why she should avoid those situations & what the potential dangers are. Remember, don't scare her. Empower her. Remind her that if she creates safe habits, chances are, she will be just fine. Create a curfew and stick with it unwaveringly. Nothing good happens after curfew.

## **Family Safety Principle 2 - Be aware, but not on guard.**

Being aware of potentially dangerous situations is not the same as being on guard. Being aware means to pay attention to what is going on around you, to exercise your peripheral vision that takes in the details of your surroundings, and to notice when something is not quite right or is very wrong.

### **Description**

Teaching our children to be aware should be empowering not scary. Arm your child with the gift of awareness. Discuss being aware of dangerous situations frequently. The possible dangerous scenarios will change as your child grows. Continue the dialogue throughout your child's growing years.

To be aware is neither to be on guard or its opposite, to be naive. Being aware is a lot like being a good driver. A good driver sees the big picture rather than narrowing his focus to one aspect of driving. Through relaxed, soft concentration a skilled driver puts his attention wherever it is most needed while still keeping his eye on the road and his surroundings.

An experienced driver neither expects to get into an accident nor does he rule out the possibility of an accident. He follows the rules of the road and doesn't overreact or underreact to his environment. If something were to occur on the road, the defensive driver trusts his instinct and skills to respond correctly.

Similar to the defensive driver, you can teach your child to be aware of his surroundings but not be excessively fearful. With this mindset, he can safely go about his business. He can be confident that, if something comes up that needs his immediate attention, his intuition will let him know.

We've all seen both on guard and naive drivers. They're scary! They overcompensate, overreact or neglect to respond to the conditions of the road. They create dangerous situations.

## **Tool 2: Determine where you are on the safety scale**

Once you are aware of how you are regarding safety, you can adjust it (if needed) to help your child be healthily aware but not on guard. Ask yourself where you fall on the safety scale:

- Are you more cautious and fearful than you should be? (Paranoid)
- Are you not cautious enough? (Naïve)
- Are you aware, but relatively free from over-worrying? Your answer is important because your child will adopt a similar mindset. Our children imitate how we are, as well as what we do. Also, your answer will make you aware of any changes you need to make regarding how you teach your child to drive his own life safely.

This awareness extends beyond being aware of potentially dangerous situations to being aware of others' goodness and the beauty of life, too. Team up with your child to notice how many good things are happening—acts of kindness, creativity, the beauty of nature, etc.

## Why Your Child Needs Martial Arts

The benefits of enrolling your child in a martial arts program extend far beyond self-defense. Martial arts will help your child in nearly every aspect of her life. It will improve your child's health, fitness, athletic abilities, confidence, concentration and behavior.

Does this sound too good to be true? It's not. Many experts agree that martial arts are good medicine for the escalating childhood obesity, increased violence at school, and deterioration of the family structure.

There is a reason why Dr. Phil, Jillian Michaels (expert from the television show, *The Biggest Loser*), Tony Robbins, pediatricians, child physiologists and educators the world over all recommend martial arts as one of the most valuable activities in which your child can participate.

### The Benefits of Martial Arts

Self-Defense. The self-defense benefits of martial arts could be described as practice the fight so that you don't have to. As your child trains he will become more confident in his ability to defend himself. As this confidence increases the need to defend himself will decrease naturally because he will begin to carry himself in a more confident manner. He'll project confidence to everyone around him and will be less vulnerable to predatory behavior. Martial arts training includes strategic or preventative self-defense as well as physical self-defense. Your child will learn how to recognize potentially dangerous situations and how to avoid confrontations.

Athletic Enhancement. There is a reason why every professional sports team in every major sport supplements their training with martial arts. Martial arts training offers several advantages. It is amazingly effective in enhancing general coordination because it uses every part of the body in a balanced way. Upper body, lower body, right side, left side, forward movement, lateral movement and rotational movement are all included in martial arts training.

Fitness. Fitness has three components: strength, flexibility and endurance. Martial arts training demands a balance between the three. Therefore, a child who trains in martial arts will find her weakest areas greatly improved. Because of her greater balance of strength, flexibility and endurance your child will be less likely to injure herself while participating in other athletic activities.

Health. While martial arts training improves health for people of all ages, it is especially effective for children. It's great exercise and it's fun so kids don't mind doing it. And part of martial arts training includes discussing diet and lifestyle habits so children who grow up training develop healthy habits that stick with them for life.

Concentration. Very few activities engage the mind, body and spirit more than martial arts. Because of this a child's ability to concentrate is greatly enhanced by his martial arts training. He'll bring this ability to concentrate to other activities, too.

Respect and Courtesy. Martial arts techniques are, by nature, designed to injure others when applied. Because of this, martial arts instructors greatly stress the importance of respect, courtesy and restraint. It has been proven time and again that children who are skilled in martial arts tend to be extremely respectful, considerate and composed.

Confidence. Martial arts training always increases a child's confidence for two specific reasons. First, there are no bench sitters. Every child participates and competes against her own potential rather than against the other students. Second, martial arts training is built on the concept of setting your child up for success by giving her a series of realistic, short-term goals that she can attain quickly while keeping her focused on an exciting long-term goal. Each time she experiences success her confidence improves until she begins to believe that she can accomplish just about anything with hard work and dedication.

## Keeping It Simple

More an art than a science, raising children is both challenging and incredibly rewarding. Each child comes into this world with his own agenda. Oftentimes our children throw curves at us that we never saw coming and, when that happens, it is hard to know exactly what to do.

I'm reminded of a story I once heard about a famous landscape architect, a master. He traveled the world creating amazing gardens and landscapes at prestigious locations. On days when he felt particularly challenged, he would pull out a mysterious piece of paper from his pocket, glance at it, nod, fold it back up and get to work with renewed inspiration and energy, resulting in another masterpiece. People were astounded by his brilliant designs that would seem to appear from thin air after he studied that piece of paper.

Eventually, the master died. His curious colleagues approached his widow and asked to see that mysterious piece of paper as they were convinced it contained the secret to his success.

After much to-do, she allowed them one glance at the old slip of paper. As they gathered around, she carefully unfolded the paper. They looked at the writing. It simply said, "When laying sod, always put the green side up."

I love this story! It reminds me how easy it is to overcomplicate things, especially parenting. In my experience, the answers to most child safety challenges are in *School Safe, Street Safe*. We only have to remember to call upon them in times of need.

I hope you'll find *School Safe, Street Safe* to be a valuable resource for years to come.