



3/29/2010

Dear TNL Families,

After the recent heartbreaking tragedies that have occurred in San Diego, we are all aware that we need to be vigilant in regards to protecting our children. As a board, we are deeply concerned about every player's safety and felt it appropriate to pass along some information regarding what we all can do to help prevent tragedies like this.

Many of us believe our kids know this stuff, but even if they do, it is important to remind them what to do and what not to do. In addition to the information and tips that are provided below, we wanted to outline a few of the basics. It is important that we all are watching out for our girls and their siblings. We are a travel ball organization, and as such, we do just that: We travel. We are often in unfamiliar places and very often in a rush to get from Point A to Point B. It is easy to get distracted. Predators are waiting for such an opportunity. That's all it takes.

Listed below are a few things that Jerry has already talked to the girls about. Most of them are common sense items, but take the time to speak with your girls about these things so that none of us will ever have to say, "I wish I would have."

- Girls should always travel in groups wherever they go: bathrooms, snack bar, parking lot, etc. Predators are looking for prey that are alone and vulnerable.
- No player should ever be left anywhere without adult supervision.
- Parents should always be on the lookout for any strangers that are observing our girls' activities. The horrific incident last month occurred very near Rancho Bernardo Community Park and this predator could certainly have been in the vicinity of our girls and easily could have been observing them at practice. If you are attending practice and/or games and observe someone that appears out of place, approach them and tactfully strike up a casual conversation. If you are not comfortable doing this, ask another parent to do so. Predators operate in the shadows, and once they are exposed, they will leave.

The list below is compiled from various websites. While some of the tips might seem like common sense, there may be some you haven't seen or considered. Please take the time to peruse the list. Our children's safety is our top priority.

1. Do not get into any car unless your parents personally tell you to do so. Also, stay away from anyone who follows you on foot or in a car. You do not need and should not go near a car to talk to the people inside.
2. Adults and other people who need help should not be asking a child for help; they should be asking other adults. Adults should not be asking you for directions or to look for a "lost puppy," or telling you that your mother or father is in trouble and that they will take you to them.
3. Quickly get away from anyone who tries to take you somewhere. Yell or scream, "This person is not my father (or mother)."
4. You should use the "buddy system" and never go places alone. Always ask your parents' permission to leave the yard/play area or to go over to someone's home, and especially always ask permission before you go into someone's home.
5. Never, never hitchhike! Do not try to get a ride with people unless your parents have told you it's OK to do so.

6. People should not ask you to keep a special secret. If they do, tell your parents or teacher. Also, tell anyone who wants to take your picture, "No," and quickly tell your parents or teacher.
7. No one should touch you on the parts of the body covered by your bathing suit, nor should you touch anyone else in those areas. Your body is special and private.
8. You can be assertive and you have the right to say "No" to someone, including adults and even relatives or friends who try to take you somewhere against your will, touch you or make you feel uncomfortable in ANY WAY.
9. **NOTE:** Many parents use a special code word that only the child knows to convey a message should someone other than a parent ask a child to accompany them anywhere.
10. **THE YELL:** Practice a "special" yell. It is low, loud and long. It tells the person trying to hurt the child, "I know what to do! I'm not an easy victim!" It tells everyone within the sound of the child's voice, "I need help!" It gets the child going, it breaks the "spell." A child should not panic and freeze, thereby becoming immobile in an emergency. When you yell you take a deep breath, thereby getting oxygen and energy to your brain and muscles. Your own yell can give you courage and get your feet moving when you need to run away!

### **School bus stop safety issues**

1. Parents should ensure that if possible, an adult waits with children at school bus stops (not always possible with one-parent families or where both parents work), but something could be worked out with all parents of children at the bus stop to be there on a rotating basis.
2. Know the path your child takes to and from home to the school bus stop.
3. Tell your children to avoid short cuts through woods, alleys, parks, or other areas where they could be alone.
4. Identify safe houses along the way that your child could run to or into for help if needed.
5. Insure your child does not have his or her name on a backpack, etc., as this would enable a potential abductor to call out to the child by name.
6. If children feels concerned for their safety, they should always tell their parents and the bus driver of any such concern.
7. If approached on the way to or from the bus stop or at the bus stop, tell your parents, the bus driver and school officials.
8. Report any suspicious vehicle. Write down the license number and provide it to school and law enforcement officials.

9. Stand away from any vehicle that stops near the bus stop and do not allow yourself to come close to or enter the vehicle of someone you don't want to.
10. Run from anyone displaying a weapon. Do this while throwing books, yelling and making as much noise as you can. Under no circumstances go with an abductor. Kick, bite, and no matter what the threat, do not go along with your kidnapper. Once he takes you away, your chances of survival greatly diminish.

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### **How to escape a kidnapper — things every child should know**

1. Children should not be afraid to tell their parents or a trusted adult or teacher if they feel threatened, even if someone has told them not to talk. If victimized, it is never their fault and never something they should be ashamed of or something that they hide from their parents or other caregivers. Tell your children you love them and that if they disappear, no matter what their kidnapper says, you will never stop loving them and you will never stop looking for them.
2. Never go with anyone you don't want to, and don't let someone take you away from where the potential kidnapper first approaches you. (This and Tip No. 3 below are the most important things a child can do to stop from becoming the victim of a kidnapper.)
3. Yell, scream, fight and run from any potential abductor. No matter what the assailant says, make as much noise and attract as much attention as you can.
4. If someone tries to lure you into a vehicle, run the opposite way the vehicle is facing, forcing the kidnapper to turn around to chase the child.
5. Run to your home, a neighbor's home, into a store or other public place yelling that someone is trying to kidnap them.
6. If on your bike, grip the bike. The kidnapper can't get both you and your bike into a car. If you're on the street and you can't run, grab a street light, traffic sign, trash can, mail box or other fixed object while yelling for help.
7. If the kidnapper points a gun at you, run anyway. Most kidnappers don't want to attract attention by firing a gun and they probably couldn't hit you anyway. It's better to be wounded and left to get help from others than to go off with a kidnapper.
8. If grabbed, twist your body and scream, "This is not my dad (or my mom)!"
9. If your assailant grabs you by your coat or backpack, twist out of his grip, leaving him with the coat or backpack as you run and scream toward another nearby adult. Attract the attention of this adult by grabbing and holding on to him or her.

10. If forced into the front seat of a four-door car or van, immediately jump into the back seat, open the rear door and escape. (Don't put on a seatbelt as this will obviously slow your escape time.)
11. If placed in the trunk of a car, look for the emergency trunk release lever and pull it and escape. If you can't find this, pull out the wires to the tail lights on both sides of the trunk, thereby attracting attention to the vehicle when the stop lights don't work. (Parents, tell police that your child knows how to do this; therefore, the police will be looking for cars with malfunctioning tail lights.)
12. Grab the keys from the kidnapper's car and throw them out the window.
13. If in traffic, step on the accelerator and make the car crash into the car in front of it.
14. Honk the horn and try to force the kidnapper to wreck the car.
15. Do not eat or drink anything your kidnapper gives to you. (It may be drugged.)
16. If your kidnapper takes you into a store, knock things down, break bottles, yell and scream that you have been kidnapped.
17. If you're held in a house, flash the lights on the front porch off and on. If in an upper apartment, flood the bathroom to cause water to flood the apartment below.
18. Never stop trying to escape and always take the opportunity to use a phone to call 911 and ask for help.
19. Parents, discuss and practice these things with your children. While doing everything we can to prevent our children from becoming the victim of a kidnapper, we need also equip them with the above information to help them escape should they be taken by an assailant. Information is key and can save the life of your child.
20. As Winston Churchill once said, "Never, never, never, never give up."

Thanks

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