

Parents can teach kids to stop abductions

(CNN) --Children may be smaller and weaker than would-be abductors, but with their parents' help, they can learn techniques to resist and escape predators, a child safety expert said.

The key to remaining safe lies in not leaving the place where the abductor approaches a child, said Bob Stuber of the Texas-based Escape School, which runs educational programs across the United States.

A kidnapper "wants to get out somewhere by himself," said Stuber, a former police officer and founder of the Escape School. "He may threaten the child, but he's not going to hurt the child right there. That's not what this is about. That takes place later."

Stuber said no neighborhood is immune to the danger of abduction. "So you have to make sure you do instruct your children," Stuber said. "Don't just say, 'Don't go off with strangers.' You have to be more specific."

Parents should instruct their children to fight and resist abductors, even if the predator threatens them, Stuber said.

From the onset of an abduction attempt, children should make as much noise as loudly as possible from the beginning and continually throughout the assault.

"Sometimes kids are afraid to do that because their abductor is telling them, 'If you say a word, I am going to hurt you.' Tell your child no matter what this person says, ... you can make as much noise as you want to."

Children should deny requests for help from strangers, which is a common abduction ploy.

Children are "very, very trusting," Stuber said.

"Parents really have to ... start driving that message home, is that you don't walk away with anybody. If they need help, they will get it from another adult," he said.

Stuber says small and simple acts that the youngest of children can perform could go a long way in saving them if they know them.

"All the way along ... there's these little windows of opportunity," he said. "And if the child knows what to watch for, it really only takes about two of these choices to get them out of danger."

Here are a few to teach, practice and review with children.

Outside a car:

- Avoid being alone, and don't take shortcuts.
- Never walk over to a car for any reason. Getting near and in a car increases the chances of being taken away and hurt.
- If approached, do not leave the area.
- Do not help an adult you do not know.
- Remember 911 calls at pay phones are free.
- Scream loudly for help, run to another adult, gripping and holding onto that other person. Stuber said this "Velcro technique" forces the other adult to listen and pay attention.
- Rotate arms forward quickly and repeatedly making big circles in the air. This windmill technique prevents a larger and stronger assailant from getting a grip on the moving child. Don't just try to pull away because the adult is stronger. Always rotate the arm to break free of the grip if restrained.
- If on a bicycle, hug the bicycle tightly, refusing to let go. "If you hold that bike, and do not let go, it's impossible to put you in a car," Stuber said. If a bike is not available, grab a garbage can or a long stick, any large object that prevents entry into a car.
- If the abductor shows a gun, run. No matter what the person says, keep running. There is only a slim chance they will try to shoot you. Firing a gun draws attention.
- Always scream.

Inside a car:

- The first step should be for the child to open the door and get out.
- If in a four-door car, jump into the back seat and go out a back door quickly.
- Place something inside of the ignition cylinder -- gum, a small button from clothing -- to keep the abductor from driving them to another location. Stuber said that if the car can be stopped or the potential crime can be stopped in the neighborhood, then the crime is going to come to an end.
- If locked in a trunk, remove the taillight panel which comes off easily, and disconnect the taillight wires. "Now you increased the odds 50 percent that the police will pull the car over because it has not brake or tail lights," Stuber said, "then they will hear you inside."

Finally, Stuber advises parents to always practice escape measures with their children. "Kids will not yell and scream when they are in trouble just 'cause you tell them to," he said. "You have to let them practice it."