

»CHILD SNATCHER« ALARM?



FEAR

»STRANGER DANGER! – PARENTS TERRIFIED OF CHILD SNATCHER!«

Headlines like this one – and many others equally sensationalist – cause fear and anger. Parents worry about the safety of their children and wonder what they can do to protect them.

Newspaper coverage like this does not help matters. What parents need are accurate information and clear, unbiased guidelines to provide reassurance. It is a fact that sexual abuse by strangers only accounts for one fifth of all cases. Parents cannot supervise their children 24/7 – and that isn't necessary. Trust and a loving upbringing make children strong and give them confidence in themselves.

WHERE

ARE CHILDREN IN DANGER?

»Child snatchers« can be anywhere where there are children. Children can also encounter adults online who may be planning sexual abuse or attacks.

In online chats potential abusers will pick a harmless-sounding profile, make themselves younger and use fake photographs. This is how they first gain the child's trust and then start exposing them to pornographic material and sexually explicit content; some may even try to arrange a meeting.

INFO

WWW.PETZE-KIEL.DE

Petze-Institut für Gewaltprävention
gemeinnützige GmbH

Dänische Straße 3–5 | 24103 Kiel
T (0431) 911 85 / 923 33
petze@petze-kiel.de

HOW CAN WE PROTECT GIRLS AND BOYS FROM SEXUAL ABUSE?

Petze-Institut für Gewaltprävention

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

WHAT

IS A CHILD SNATCHER?

»Child snatchers« are people who approach children outside on the streets and attempt to lure them to a secluded place. Often, the children are promised some treat if they come along. Another strategy is to tell the child that the person has been sent by their mother or father.

Most adults who speak to a child do not have bad intentions!

WHO

ARE THE PERPETRATORS?

Many people believe that the greatest danger lies outside the child's direct social circle.

In fact, the large majority (80%) of perpetrators are people within this circle. They are people who know the child well and whom the child trusts – e.g. people in sports clubs, neighbours or family members.

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HOW

CAN I PROTECT MY CHILD FROM ABUSE?

The following tips are intended to help and give parents advice on protecting girls and boys from sexual abuse.



1) IN THE FAMILY

» Children who receive attention, recognition, praise and affection from their parents are far less at risk from questionable advances by other people.

» Build your child's confidence by listening and taking their thoughts and emotions seriously. Encourage girls and boys to ask questions if they are uncertain about anything – regardless of the situation or the subject.

» Listen attentively, ask questions and try to understand what your child has experienced. This makes it easier for children to talk about oppressive or »funny« experiences or feelings.

» Ensure that your child receives good, age-appropriate sex education. Your child should be able to name any violations and have the confidence to speak about them.

» Make sure that you have clear arrangements within the family: both children and parents should always know where anyone is at any time. If you or your child are running late, always let the others know.

» Arrange a family code word so that no one can claim that they have been sent to pick up your child on your behalf.



» Talk about boundaries in the family. Your child should know that nobody has the right to touch them if they don't want it, and that they can say "NO" if they are uncomfortable with anything. Praise your child if they challenge boundary violations, including by yourself!

» Help build your child's confidence by allowing them to go to the shops or to the playground on their own as appropriate.



IMPORTANT!

Avoid spreading rumours about »child snatchers« as this creates needless distress or hysteria!

2) ON THE WAY TO SCHOOL

» Make sure your child walks to school with other children, and ensure that they use routes they are familiar with.

» The shortest route is not always the safest! Children often feel safer on busier streets.



» Walk the route several times together with your child. Show your child where they can ask for help if necessary (e.g., specific shops, doctor's surgeries or local government offices).

» Always make sure that your child's name is not visible on their T-shirt, backpack or on your car. A child is more likely to trust a stranger who addresses them by name.

3) ON THE INTERNET

» Set up family rules for the use of the internet.

» Talk to your child about the sites they are visiting.

» Explain to your child how risky it can be to pass on personal details.

» Discuss with your child how they should respond if they receive messages or images that are scary or make them feel uncomfortable.

FURTHER INFORMATION

» *»Mutig fragen – besonnen handeln«*
Published by:
Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. To order the brochure (**German only**) contact:
publikationen@bundesregierung.de

» Petze-Institut für Gewaltprävention
www.petze-kiel.de
(PETZE also organises parent and teacher evenings on this topic)

» For more information about keeping your child safe online, visit
www.klicksafe.de

» Sexual abuse helpline
(0800) 22 55 530
www.hilfetelefon-missbrauch.de

» Online counselling for sexual abuse experienced online
www.save-me-online.de

» Helpline for parents
www.elterntelefon.de

