CODE WORD??

SAFETY TIP OF THE MONTH

Child Safety and Code Words

"Code Word?" If you are unfamiliar with code words, you might be wondering what they are.

A code word is a single word or phrase used by parents/ caretakers with their children to confirm messages or rides with another relative or adult. These are typically used when the child doesn't know about the arrangement, such as an emergency or unexpected situation.

The parent/caregiver has worked with the child to know that if someone other than the parent would pick them up from school etc. the child would ask the person for the codeword. If the adult does not know the word, the child would refuse to go.

Every day, parents around the world give their children the same advice they themselves grew up on: "Don't speak to strangers." While excellent advice, few

Talk to your child, make sure they understand that most "bad guys" don't look like monsters or the bad guys they see on TV.

parents will go on to explain to their children why this rule is so important. Their reasons for not covering this area will vary according to the individual but even if it is discussed, these safety conversations often leave out the possible dangers from supposed authority figures and people the children already know.

Most experts agree that "Code Words" are an important tool to use with our children. However, they are not foolproof.

Therefore, it's important to have discussions to

make sure your child understands how, when and where to use the code word(s) of your family as well as general safety rules.

Dr. Phil counts down the Top Five Ways for Parents to Protect Children:

5. Prepare your children without fear.
4. Set up their world for safety.
3. Listen and look.
2. Have a plan.
1. Teach your children to self-protect.

Special Points of Interest

- Child Safety for Parents
- Stranger Danger Tips
- FBI Kids - Safety Tips
- Child Safety Checklist
- Child Safety: Preventing Child Abduction
- Beyond 'Code Words': How to Keep Kids Safe
- Using Code Words to Keep Your Child Safe
- Code Words for Children's Safety

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In this article Dr. Phil explains in more detail how to accomplish this list. One of his suggestions is use of a "code word." When developing this code word, you must remember to use a word the whole family can remember and agree on, yet not so easy anyone could guess. Some families' use several codes for different situations such as if someone approaches

them, they are being bullied, or are latchkey kids returning from school.

Depending on your family, this can even be made into a game of sorts with code words for things like needing a ride to leave a party without

losing face with friends.

We want our children to know we have their back. So even if they have gotten themselves into a bad situation or just one where they feel uncomfortable they can reach out for assistance. Encourage your child to trust their gut. Children are much more intuitive than adults and need to learn to trust themselves.

Unfortunately, the most dangerous people are

Friends and family members don't come with "Warning" signs. Work with your children to always remember and use the "Codeword" no matter who is wanting to pick them up or take them for a ride.

usually friends and family members. It's a sad fact of life, which is why we must practice these codes with our children as well. Test them, ask "what if one of your aunts/uncles came to pick you up? Would you go with them? What if it was one of mom

or dads friends? Would you go with them?" If they say yes ask, "How do you know they are telling you the truth; that we really sent them?"

You may get some wild answer, but you know it's time to practice and stress that the rule applies to everyone.

Have friends and family members help you test the code word to ensure that your child not only remembers it, but understands how to use it.

One final tip, stress to your child that they aren't to share their "code word" with anyone.