



LEAPS OF THOUGHT

## Three Boys Missing Children's Safety

### Five Tips for Increasing Your Child's Safety in 2007

Parents are often challenged by their inability to accept the idea that abduction, molestation or abuse could happen to their child. But, the fact is people who perpetrate these crimes count on our inability to accept that fact and our willingness to risk our children's safety because of it.

In 2007, increase your child's safety by incorporating these five tips into your parental strategy:

1. **Stop believing it can't happen to your child.** Many hear the sensational child-molestation-murder cases in the news and think: "Oh, that's sad. That will never happen to my child."
2. **Educate your children while they're young.** The more comfortable you make your child feel in talking to you about situations that they do not understand or feel embarrassed or ashamed of, the higher the likelihood that they will speak out in a case of abuse.
3. **Believe your children.** It is crucial that when a child reports an incident that adults listen, take the message seriously and act in a responsible manner by contacting law enforcement or the local child welfare agency. Do not confront the alleged offender. This is the responsibility of law enforcement, and they have been trained to handle these matters in a way that will ensure the safety and welfare of the child. They will also be able to work with local agencies that can help support the child emotionally and psychologically. This is an important step in helping the child cope with the process of bringing the accused to justice.
4. **Work with your child on issues of self-esteem and loneliness.** Children who have low self-esteem are more likely to become targets for known offenders. Be alert to friendships your child forms with adults who are overly complimentary, frequently initiate affectionate contact with your child and actively seek out opportunities to spend time alone with the child.
5. **Do not assume your child will follow your instructions if a stranger approaches them.** Studies have shown that some children will respond in the way they have been trained, while others will not. Children are children - Toys, candy or pets can easily distract a child. Recognize this and be vigilant in knowing where your child is at all times.