

# Strangers Are Just Strangers

## 5-6 Year Olds

### Day 1 of 5

## Objectives

- To discover existing misconceptions children have about strangers.
- To clarify who strangers really are.
- To establish that children must be responsible for themselves when they are selves.

## Introduction for adult

Most children have a distorted sense of who and what "strangers" are. They believe that strangers are people who want to hurt little children, who might lead them into dangerous situations, and that they can be recognized because they look bad or mean. From a child's point of view, staying safe is simply a matter of watching out for people who look like their stereotypical "bad guy." This is precisely what makes them so vulnerable. The starting point, then, for any program must be clearing out the mistaken ideas in order to make room for more credible and workable rules and guidelines.

## Introduction for children

We're going to talk about strangers, and about the rules you should follow to help keep yourself safe.

What is a stranger?

*Repeat what the child says. Even if it is the right answer the first time, keep asking, "What else do you think about strangers?"*

*Typical responses include someone who: murders you, kidnaps you, poisons you, or takes you away and you never see your mom and dad ever again.*

Even if a child says, "A stranger is someone you don't know," continue to elicit ideas to identify misconceptions.

After you've gotten the full range of misconceptions, follow up with the video.

Let's see what other boys and girls think about strangers.

## Watch videotape

<https://www.youtube.com/watchv=ENWdN1NpY2M&list=PLSrCYUKewj4fovjoOqyXkWnJ9mFR4Tcfo&index=6>

## Role-play

*The message is that most strangers are really nice people, and, in fact, all the people children know were strangers before they became friends.*

So, what if a stranger knows your name? Does that mean you know them?

*Children quite naturally assume you know them if you know their name.*

Even if someone knows your name, that doesn't mean they know you.

How could a stranger know your name?

*Name tags, barrettes, lunch boxes, belts, shirts, etc.*

Even if a stranger knows your name you know their name, that doesn't mean you know them. They are still a stranger.

Can you tell by looking at someone if they are a nice person or not? How can you tell?

What do you think a bad person looks like?

*Again, you want to get the range of the child's misconceptions without comment. Some of the typical answers are outrageous and may include: beards, masks, dirty clothes, mean looking face, shifty eyes, etc.*

What if you put on a costume that made you look like someone really mean and awful? Would that make you mean on the inside?

Of course not, you would still be a really terrific kid on the inside, even if you looked really scary.

What if you're in a really bad mood and your grandpa comes over? Don't you smile and act nice?

So, you can't really tell by how a person looks whether they are a good person or not.

*Not all children will get this. It's appropriate to make the next point anyway.*

**RP:** What if you're in your front yard (vary location as you go through the role-plays) and you are all by yourself?

Who's taking care of you and keeping you safe when you are all by yourself?

*The answer you are looking for is MYSELF!*

That's right. When you're by yourself you have to take care of yourself, and that's where rules help.

Rules tell you what to do when you are by yourself and there is not a grownup taking care of you.

**RP:** What if you are crossing the street and there is a school guard? Do you still look both ways?

*It's appropriate to discuss times when adults are present and children still need to pay attention, knowing they may need to make decisions that keep themselves safe.*

**RP:** What if you're at the swimming pool and there is a life guard? Is it all right to go in water that is too deep for you?

*These role-plays are about thinking, planning and letting you know what skills your child has.*

*Pretty soon, your child will start asking the "What if..." questions. That lets you know they are thinking about these ideas and ready to build their skills.*

Next time, we're going to learn some rules to follow around strangers.