

Strangers Are Just Strangers

5-6 Year Olds

Day 5 of 5

Objectives

To illustrate the "What if..." game as a useful tool for practicing the rules.

To continue to reinforce the four rules for strangers through role-play.

To teach the prevention of abduction techniques.

Introduction for adult

"What if..." is a teaching game that uses the spontaneous questions of the children and your own "What if..." questions as a springboard for discussion. By encouraging children to talk about their thoughts, and by discussing your own reactions and ideas to a "What if..." question, you and your children have an opportunity to think through and establish a variety of possible responses.

The "What if..." game helps children to anticipate and plan. It is this aspect of the Game that makes it the single most valuable tool you have for teaching personal safety to your children and for encouraging ongoing reinforcement and participation.

The purpose of any "What if..." Game is to:

1. Find out what children are thinking.
2. Talk about possible solutions to a question or problem.
3. Agree on a solution that seems best and from that, establish working guidelines for what children should do in that particular situation.

Children ask "What if..." questions that reflect their own fears, concerns, and anxieties. Children are constantly exposed to reports of situations that they then apply to themselves. For example, they see the story of a missing or kidnapped child in the news and wonder if such a thing could happen to them. Children often translate these thoughts into "What if..." questions. They might say, "What if I was playing in the yard and that kidnapper came around?"

If you can resist the urge to answer and instead let the child answer the question first, you will discover how the child thinks, what his or her concerns are, how s/he solves problems, how s/he thinks the world works, and what s/he knows and doesn't know about staying safe.

By listening to children's ideas, you get accurate information about concerns and can better teach the skills that are at the very heart of effective prevention, that is, the ability to think, to act, to react and to recognize when they need help and how to get it.

Introduction for children

We've been playing the "What if..." game for the past few days to learn the rules for strangers. Now I have a new "What if..."

What if you got lost in a shopping center or mall or big department store? (vary location as needed)
What would you do?

This introduction is to focus the child on the subject before watching the videotape.

Has that ever happened to you?

What did you do?

How did that make you feel?

Sadness is a legitimate and common feeling.

Let's watch and see what the children in the video learn to do.

Watch video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wxoW7h6cPdM&list=PLSrCYUKewj4fovjoOgyXkWnJ9mFR4Tcfo&index=2>

Role-play

So, if you're ever lost, what do you do?

1. Stop and look all around.
2. Yell for your Mom or whoever you came with. They might be just on the other side of the clothes rack and you can't see them, but they will hear you.
3. If you are still lost, go to the nearest cash register where there is someone working.
4. Tell the person your name, who you are with and that you are lost.
5. Then don't move from that spot until your Mom, Dad or whoever you were with comes to pick you up.

Give the child an opportunity to practice what they have seen on the videotape using the following progression to reinforce and solidify the sequence.

RP: What if you're lost, what do you do first?

Stop and look.

Then what do you do?

Yell your mom or dad's name

Where do you go next?

Go to the first cash register where there is someone working.

What is a cash register?

Where you pay for things.

What do you say?

My name is ...

My Mother's name is ...

I'm lost.

Last, do you remember the most important part?

Don't move from that spot until the person you came with comes and gets you.

What if the store manager comes and tells you to come to the office with him? Do you go?

"No, my mom and dad said to stay right here if I got lost."

What if the store manager tries to make you go?

(Pretend to force them to go along, but not in a scary way)

Say what you need. For example:

"Help, this is not my daddy." "I need help."

"Help, I'm lost."

"Help, I'm supposed to stay here."

Remember, this part should not be alarming in any way, nor is the store manager bad. He's simply crabby. The objective is to teach this skill simply and clearly so the children feel confident and competent.

Remember, you can't run because you have to stay right in that spot until someone you know comes to get you.

Who do you think might help you if you scream?

Many adults will respond if they know the child really needs help and isn't just playing a game.

The person at the cash register will probably be a stranger, right?

Why is it okay to talk to that stranger?

There are times when you have to ask someone you don't know to help you. The best person to ask is someone who is working. This is actually making an "exception" to the rule, but this word will have no meaning for most of the children in this age group.

Do you take anything from the person who is working?

No, there's no need to.

Do you go anywhere with them?

No, you wait for your parents or the person you were with.

Do you stay an arm's reach away?

No, you stay right next to the cash register.

Is it okay to talk to a stranger when you're lost and need help?

Yes, until the person you were with comes and gets you.

RP: What if you were on your way to the cash register and a nice lady stopped and asked if you were lost and if she could help you? What would you do?

The correct answer is: She is a stranger. You walk around her, do not talk to her and continue to the cash register. You can also role-play with the person being a man or a store manager or a police officer.

RP: What if your next-door neighbor asks you over for cookies? You say, "I have to go ask," and she says, "I just hung up from talking to your mom and she said it is okay." Do you go?

No. You always have to get permission straight from your Mom or Dad.

RP: What if someone was in a white bunny suit, with long white ears and had a basket filled with candy? Would that still be a stranger?

Would it be all right for you to take candy from the person in the bunny suit?

Only if the grownup you are with says it is all right. If you are by yourself or with your friends, the bunny is still a stranger and you should follow the rules.

RP: What if the person looked like a clown and was handing out balloons and taking children for a ride in his wagon? What should you do?

Again, the person is a stranger and it's all right only if the person taking care of the child says so. Otherwise, the child should go and tell a grownup.

We've talked about strangers and learned a few rules to help prevent problems, but the most important thing is to always go and ask someone you know for help if you feel scared or need help.

Who are all the people you could go to for help?

Encourage the child to think of lots of resources. Examples for this age group are: mom, dad, grandma, grandpa and teachers. Remind them about neighbors, parents of other children and people in the school.

There are lots of people you can go to if you have a need help. But grownups can't read your mind and they have a lot of other things that they think about. So, if you need help, you need to say so loud and clear.

NOTE: This concludes the unit on strangers. These skills and concepts will naturally crop up in everyday experiences for children. You should feel free to reinforce and encourage children to use the rules and to think about "What if..." questions as an ongoing part of learning personal safety.