

Beyond Stranger Danger

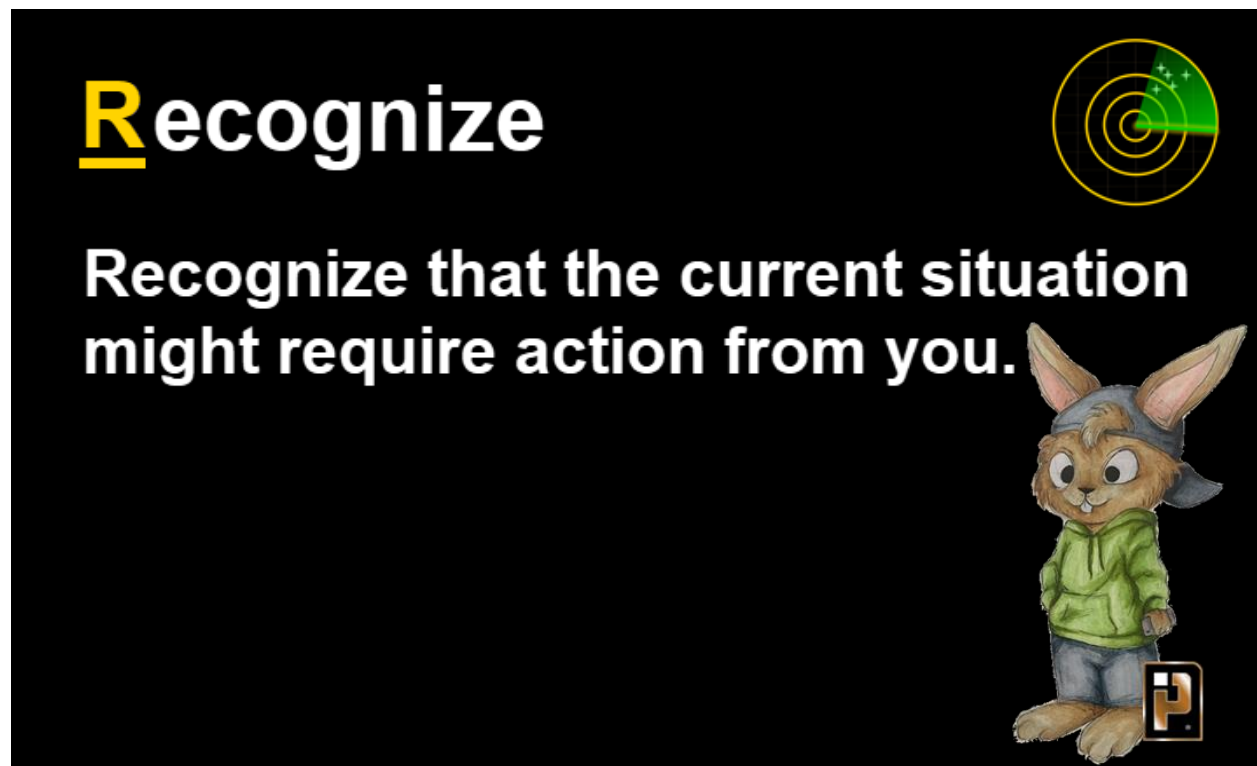
When you were a kid, did your parents ever say, “**Never talk to strangers**”? It’s a common warning—but the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) actually advises against this guidance. The truth is, depending on the situation, your child may have no choice but to talk to someone they don’t know in order to ensure their safety.

The NCMEC encourages children who are approached by a stranger to immediately seek out a “safe” adult. Safe adults may include police officers, store employees, teachers, security guards, or parents with children nearby.

It’s crucial to teach children how to **Recognize** these trusted individuals so they know who they can safely approach and report the situation. This is just one of several guidelines recommended by the NCMEC. For the remaining, more detailed NCMEC guidelines, refer to the last section of this document.

Pro Tip:

Regardless of any situation involving a potential danger or threat, Radar Rabbit encourages you to always use your RADAR. If you are having trouble recalling what the RADAR acronym stands for, refer to your Radar Rabbit book or visit www.radartherabbit.com.



Recognize

Recognize that the current situation might require action from you.

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Practical Strategies from the NCMEC

The information below is sourced from the website of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (www.missingkids.org). Some of the material has been modified for improved readability.

1. Teach the Difference Between “Safe Adults” and “Unsafe Requests”.

Instead of saying all strangers are bad, explain that:

- Safe adults do not ask kids for help.
- Safe adults don't ask kids to keep secrets from parents.
- Safe adults don't ask kids to go somewhere without permission.

You might say:

“If an adult asks you for help finding a puppy or asks you to get in a car, that’s not a safe request.”

2. Create a Family Password (Codeword).

Have a secret family password.

Rule:

- If someone says, “**Your parents told me to pick you up**”, your child must ask for the password.
- If the person doesn't know it, they leave and tell a trusted (safe) adult.

This is simple but very effective.

3. Practice the “No–Go–Yell–Tell” Rule.

Teach kids a simple sequence:

1. NO – Say “**No!**” loudly.
2. GO – Run away immediately.
3. YELL – “**This is not my parent!**”
4. TELL – Tell a safe adult right away.

Practicing this makes it easier for them to react under stress.

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4. Teach Them to Trust Their “Uh-Oh Feeling”.

Kids should know that if something feels wrong, they can:

- Leave immediately
- Refuse an adult
- Break a rule to stay safe

Tell them:

“You will never get in trouble for leaving a situation that makes you feel unsafe.”

5. Identify Safe Adults in Different Places.

Help them identify safe people they can go to:

Examples:

- Teachers
- Police officers
- Store employees
- Parents with children
- Security guards

Avoid telling them to just find an adult. Instead, tell them to find a safe adult.

6. Role-Play Real Scenarios.

Role-playing helps the lesson stick.

Practice situations like:

- Someone offers you candy.
- Someone says your parent was hurt and they need you to come with them.
- Someone asks you to help look for a lost dog.

Let them practice saying NO and running away.

7. Teach Them Not to Share Personal Information.

Kids should know not to give strangers:

- Their full name
- Their address
- Where they go to school
- Where their parents are

This applies online and in person.

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8. Keep Communication Open.

Kids who feel comfortable talking to parents are far more likely to report uncomfortable situations.

Ask simple daily questions like:

- *“Did anything weird or uncomfortable happen today?”*
- *“Did anyone ask you to keep a secret?”*

An Important Principle

Experts like the child safety organization National Center for Missing & Exploited Children emphasize teaching confidence and awareness, not fear.

The goal is for kids to think:

“I know what to do if something feels wrong.”

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