



The Parent Safety & Character Starter Guide

Raising Safe, Strong, Wise, and Respectful Children

A FREE HOISTPOINT RESOURCE

"Children need more than rules. They need wisdom. They need more than supervision. They need judgment. They need more than protection. They need character."
— Diane Hagopian, Founder, HoistPoint

A Letter to Parents

Thank you for being here. Whether you are raising a toddler, a teenager, or somewhere in between, one thing is certain: there has never been a more important time to be intentional about the development of our children. We live in a world filled with extraordinary opportunities, but also unprecedented challenges. Children today are growing up in an environment shaped by technology, social media, constant information, increasing social pressures, and a rapidly changing culture.

As parents, it is natural to want to protect our children from every danger, disappointment, and hardship they may encounter. Yet true protection is not simply about shielding children from the world — it is about **preparing them to navigate it**.

Our goal as parents is not simply to keep children safe today. It is to help them become capable adults tomorrow — adults who can think critically, recognize unhealthy situations, make wise decisions, stand firm in their values, and possess the confidence to lead themselves and the character to positively influence others.

What This Guide Covers

- **Part 1:** Foundations — Safety, Consent, Character
- **Part 2:** Awareness, Discernment & Wise Decision-Making
- **Part 3:** Technology Foundations
- **Part 4:** Creating a Safe Home Culture
- **Part 5:** Preparing Children for Life

Part 1: Foundations

Every parent wants their child to be safe. But safety alone is not enough. Children must also learn how to think, make decisions, navigate challenges, build healthy relationships, and contribute positively to the world around them. This guide is designed to help parents build both safety and character — together, these qualities create the foundation for a confident, capable, and resilient adult.

Safety Without Character Is Incomplete

A child may understand danger yet still make poor choices if they lack integrity, self-control, or responsibility. Safety is not merely about avoiding harm — it is about developing the character necessary to make wise decisions.

Character Without Awareness Is Vulnerable

Children should be kind — but kindness alone is not enough. Trust must be balanced with discernment. Respect must be paired with an understanding of boundaries. Awareness helps children protect their kindness rather than lose it.

Raising Future Adults

We are not simply raising children. We are raising future adults. The habits, beliefs, attitudes, and decision-making patterns children develop today often follow them into adulthood. Every lesson contributes to the person they will become.

Safe Adults, Consent & Boundaries



What Is a Safe Adult?

A safe adult is a trusted individual who consistently demonstrates care, responsibility, honesty, and respect for children. Trust should be based on **behavior, not titles**.

Safe adults listen carefully, respect boundaries, tell the truth, keep children safe, encourage communication, do not ask children to keep secrets, and act consistently over time.

- 📌 Every family should identify several trusted adults a child can contact if they need help — including names, phone numbers, and how to reach them.

Consent & Bodily Autonomy

Consent means giving permission freely and willingly. Children should understand: **"My body belongs to me."** This principle helps establish confidence and healthy boundaries.

Healthy boundaries include physical, emotional, personal space, and privacy. Children should learn that discomfort is important information — and that respect is a two-way street.

- Ask before touching others
- Respect personal space
- Accept "no" gracefully
- Avoid pressuring others

Three Essential Character Traits

1

Respect

Recognizing the value and dignity of yourself and others — through self-care, healthy boundaries, kindness, courtesy, and empathy. Character is demonstrated through behavior.

2

Integrity

Doing what is right even when nobody is watching. Honesty, accountability, keeping your word, and understanding that trust must be earned through consistent actions over time.

3

Courage

Acting despite fear. Standing up for what is right, speaking up when something feels wrong, protecting yourself and others. Courage and wisdom always work together.

Understanding Harmful Behaviors & Situational Awareness

Recognizing Red Flags

Children should learn to recognize warning signs early. Common red flags include:

- Requests for secrecy
- Excessive flattery or boundary violations
- Pressure to act quickly
- Isolation from safePart 5: adults
- Dishonesty or controlling behavior

Exploitation, coercion, and manipulation all rely on secrecy and pressure. Recognizing these patterns early can prevent larger problems later.

What To Do When Something Feels Wrong

01

Stay calm

02

Leave if possible

03

Move toward safety

04

Contact a safe adult

05

Keep telling safe adults until someone helps

- 📌 The Golden Rule: **Treat others the way you wish to be treated.** Apply it at home, at school, and online. Families who regularly discuss and model respect create strong foundations for character development.

Never Become the Danger

Children should learn that safety is not only about avoiding harmful behavior from others — it is also about ensuring that we do not become the source of harm ourselves. Strong character protects both ourselves and others.

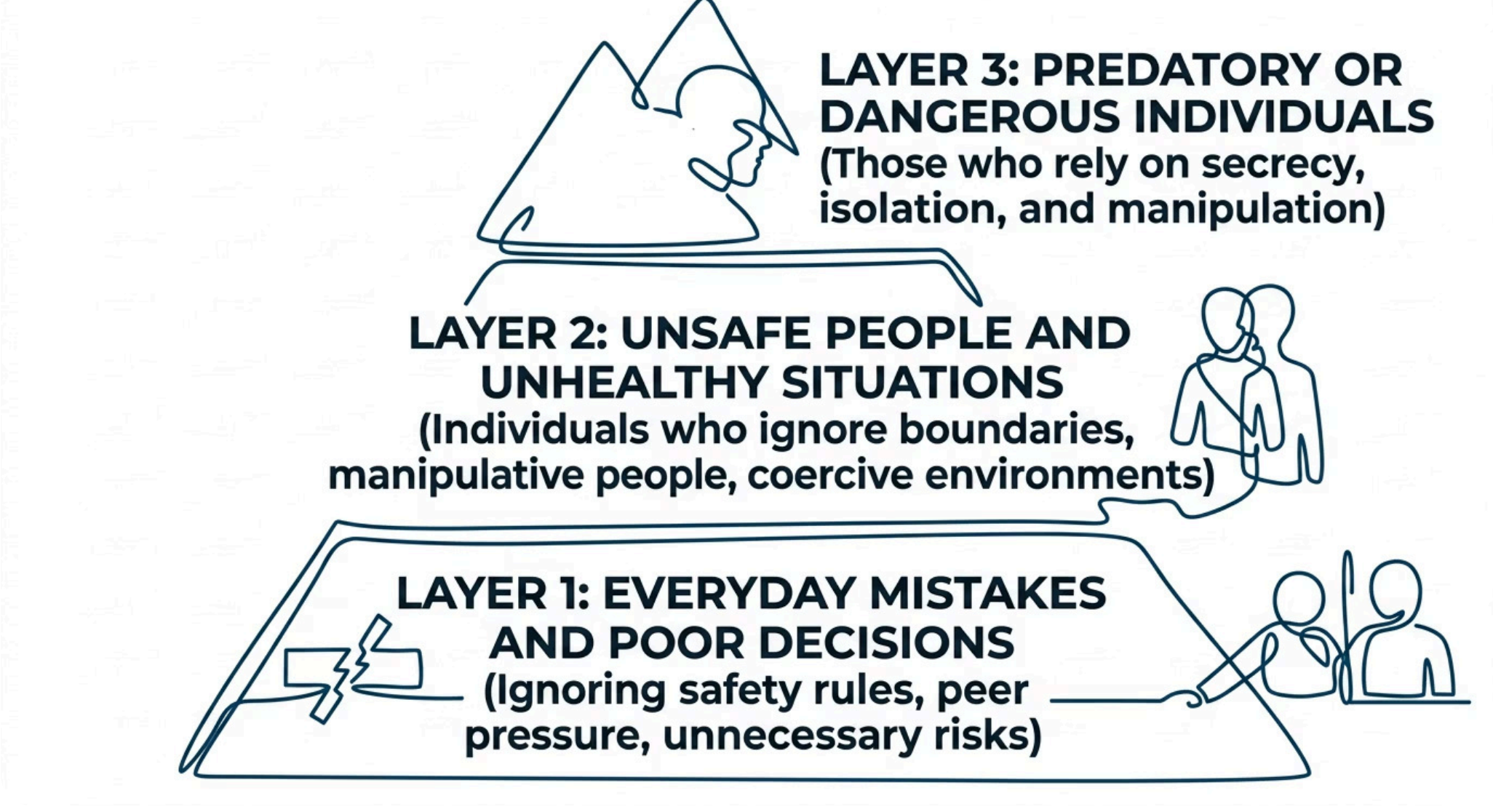
Kindness- Being caring and helpful to others	Self-Control- Managing your actions, words, and feelings
Integrity- Doing the right thing, even when no one is watching	Respect- Treating people, things, and yourself with care and consideration
Responsibility- Taking care of your duties and doing what you should do	Accountability- Owning your choices and actions, and fixing mistakes when needed

Part 2: Awareness, Discernment, Family Safety Rules & Building a Safe Home

Part 2 through Part 4 — Understanding Risk, Building Judgment, Technology, and Creating a Safe Home Culture

Understanding Risk & Danger

One of the most important lessons we can teach children is that safety is not about being afraid of the world — it is about understanding it. Most people are good. Most interactions are safe. Most communities are filled with individuals who care about others. At the same time, children benefit from learning that not every situation carries the same level of risk.



Wisdom begins with understanding the difference between these layers — not through fear, but through awareness, discernment, and boundaries.

Awareness Without Fear

Awareness vs. Fear

Many parents worry that safety discussions may create anxiety. When handled properly, safety discussions and establishing **Family Safety Rules**, the opposite is often true. Knowledge tends to increase confidence. Preparation tends to reduce fear.

Awareness asks: "What is happening around me?"
Fear asks: "What if something bad happens?"
Awareness and boundaries are both grounded in observation.

Family Safety Rules can include not allowing small children to answer the door, not wearing headphones and staring at their phones on public transportation or when walking the street, walking home with a group of friends rather than walking alone, no swimming in pools without parental supervision, no sleepovers, checking in with a phone call to their parents if returning home late, keep GPS tracking on, memorizing emergency public service phone numbers like the police or fire department and emergency contact phone numbers and addresses, etc.

Why Confidence Is a Safety Skill

Confident children are often better able to set boundaries, speak up, ask questions, leave uncomfortable situations, and seek help when needed. Confidence is not merely a personality trait — it is a protective factor.

Children who understand what to do in difficult situations often feel more capable and secure. Prepared children are often less fearful because they possess tools and options.

When children know their own safety boundaries, have the affirmation of their emotional and physical safety through clear Family Safety Rules, and cultivate the awareness to identify and understand red flags, children become more confident in defending their own safety.

Other confidence builders include **self-defense courses, martial arts training/sparring, swim lessons**, and **First Aid** and **CPR courses**.

Building Discernment

Discernment is the ability to distinguish what is true from what is false, what is healthy from what is unhealthy, and what is wise from what is unwise. It is one of the most valuable life skills a child can develop.

What Do You See?

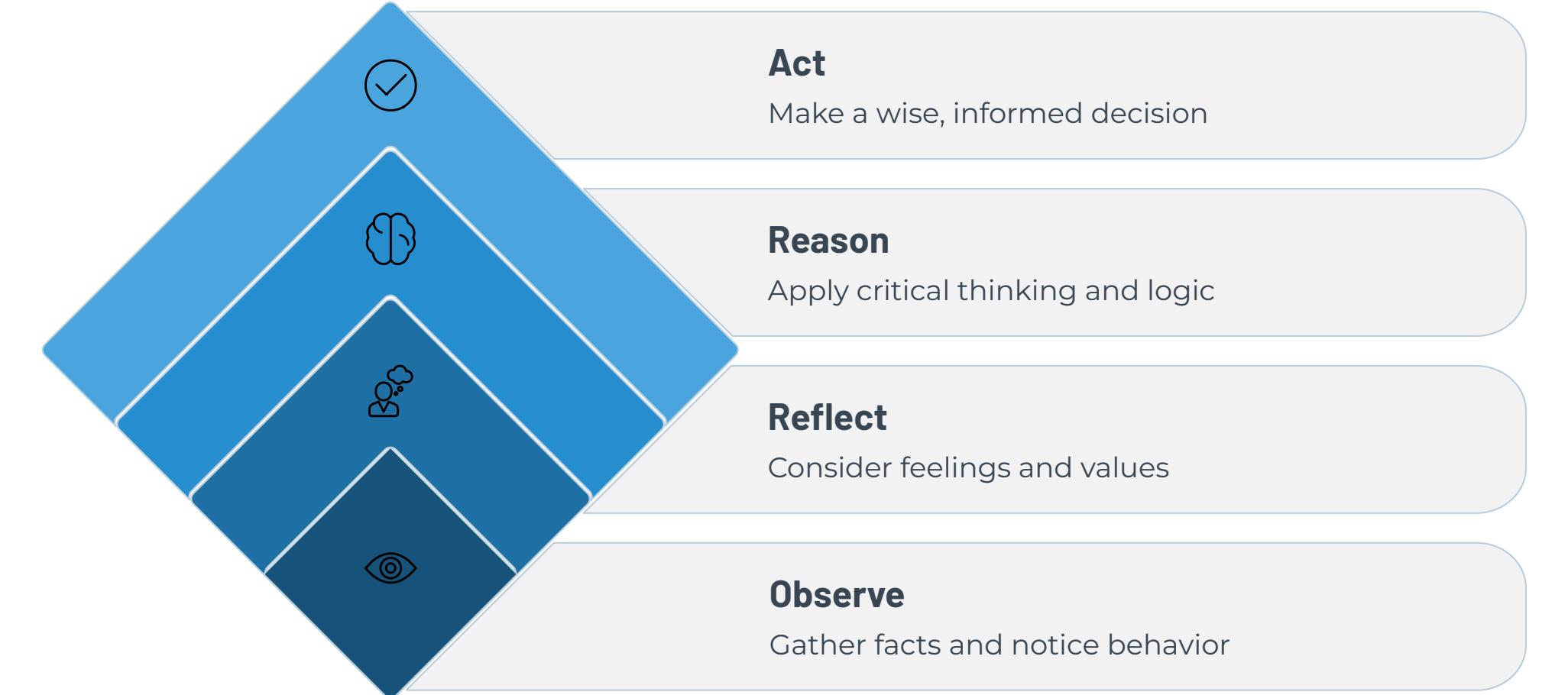
Observe facts. Pay attention to consistency, honesty, respect, reliability, and accountability. Actions often tell us more than words. Patterns matter — one isolated event may mean little, but repeated behavior reveals important information.

What Do You Feel?

Emotions provide information. Pay attention to discomfort, confusion, pressure, or unease. Uncomfortable feelings deserve attention. While feelings are not always correct, they should never be ignored.

What Does Your Mind Tell You?

Combine observation and intuition. Think carefully before acting. Wise decisions involve facts, feelings, values, and consequences. Neither feelings nor facts should operate alone — the strongest decisions involve both.



Critical thinking protects children from manipulation and poor decision-making. Children should be encouraged to ask: Who is telling me this? Why are they saying it? Does it make sense? What evidence supports it?

Creating a Safe Home Environment

Physical & Emotional Safety

A child's first experience with safety should begin at home. Safe homes establish routines, boundaries, and expectations that support well-being. Children should feel comfortable knowing these boundaries, asking questions, admitting mistakes, sharing concerns, and seeking help. Fear of punishment should never prevent a child from seeking support.

Respectful Family Communication

Children learn communication by observing it. Model respect, listening, patience, and self-control. Teach children to use language that reflects empathy and kindness. The way family members speak to one another establishes the emotional tone of the home.

Part 3: Technology Foundations

Technology is one of the most powerful tools ever created. It allows children to learn, communicate, create, and explore. At the same time, it introduces challenges that previous generations never had to navigate. The goal is not to raise children who fear technology — the goal is to raise children who use technology wisely.

Technology as a Responsibility

Many families treat technology as a right. A healthier approach is to view it as a responsibility. As children demonstrate maturity, responsibility, honesty, and good judgment, additional freedoms can be granted. Privileges and responsibilities should grow together.

Delaying Social Media Use

Social media platforms are intentionally designed to capture attention. Children may be exposed to social comparison, cyberbullying, inappropriate content, validation-seeking behavior, and online predators. Parents should carefully consider whether a child is emotionally prepared before granting access, and if alternatives like Bark Phones or non-Smart phones are more appropriate until age 16 or 17. Phased technology access is recommended.

Online Stranger Safety

People online are not always who they claim to be. Online identities, photos, and stories can be fake not just on social media but on gaming platforms and applications. Even your child's voices and can be copied and manipulated to send you coercive calls and videos. Children should never share personal information with strangers, send private photos, agree to meet someone without parental involvement, or keep online relationships secret from trusted adults. Similarly, it is not recommend parents share photos of their children, especially of their faces, voices, and their schools or school uniforms, on any online platforms. Real children have been targeted in person because of online photos. Deep fake, criminal content can also be created from photos on social media platforms.

Digital Footprints

The internet remembers. Even deleted content may be saved, shared, screenshot, or archived. Meta data and real time location sharing can be used to track their exact location therefore posting locations while at the location are dangerous, as are posting photos of the outside of your home or near your home. Before posting, encourage children to ask: Would I be comfortable showing this to my parents? Would I be comfortable seeing this again ten years from now? Digital choices can have long-term consequences.

Seeking Validation Online: Likes, followers, comments, and views do not determine a person's value. Children should understand that confidence comes from **character, competence, relationships, contribution, and integrity** — not internet popularity.

Family Technology Expectations

Technology rules vary from family to family. What matters most is consistency. Children benefit when expectations are clear and discussed before problems arise.

Areas to Address as a Family

- Screen time expectations
- Device-free family time
- Bedtime technology rules
- Appropriate online behavior
- Social media use and timing
- Privacy expectations
- Consequences for misuse

Technology Should Support Life, Not Replace It

Technology should never replace family relationships, face-to-face communication, outdoor activity, creativity, reading, physical activity, or real-world experiences. The goal is balance.

When used wisely, technology can enhance learning, connection, and opportunity. When used carelessly, it can distract from the very experiences that help children grow into capable, confident, and responsible adults.

Part 4: Creating a Safe Home Culture

Emotional Safety

Before children learn about stranger safety, technology, or relationships, they learn whether their home is a place where they feel secure, valued, respected, and heard. Emotional safety helps children develop confidence, resilience, and trust. A child who feels emotionally safe is more likely to come to a parent when something feels wrong.

Open Communication

Children should know they can talk to their parents about mistakes, friendships, peer pressure, safety concerns, technology, and relationships. Listen carefully, ask questions, seek understanding, and avoid overreacting.

Responsibility & Accountability

Responsibility teaches accountability, competence, independence, and self-respect. Everyone makes mistakes — accountability teaches children how to respond. Tell the truth, accept responsibility, make corrections, and learn from mistakes.

Family Culture

Every family has a culture created by habits, values, expectations, rules, and behaviors practiced repeatedly at home. The values, behaviors, and **Family Safety Rules** demonstrated and practiced at home often become the values, behaviors, and self-care practices children carry into adulthood. Lead by example — always.

Part 5: Preparing Children for Life & Continuing the Journey

Final Encouragement, A Letter to Young Leaders, and How to Continue with HoistPoint

Final Encouragement to Parents

"Parenting is one of the most important responsibilities we will ever undertake. No parent will do everything perfectly. The goal is not perfection — the goal is progress. Children do not need perfect parents. They need parents who are present, intentional, and committed to helping them grow."
— Diane Hagopian, Founder, HoistPoint

As you work to build safety, character, responsibility, confidence, and wisdom within your family, remember that the small things matter — the conversations you have, the values you model, the boundaries you establish, the love you demonstrate. These seemingly ordinary moments often become the foundation upon which a child's future is built.

- **Protect your children**

Prepare them for life. Guide them with wisdom. Teach them respect, responsibility, courage, kindness, and character. Create Your **Family Safety Rules** today and share them at dinner time. Review them together at least once a month.
- **Help them develop awareness without fear**

And confidence without arrogance. Create a space of safety, warmth and love at home so that they can easily feel the contrast of unsafe people and environments. The work you are doing matters more than you may ever know.
- **Help them become people of contribution**

Most importantly, help them become the kind of people who contribute positively to the lives of others.

A Letter to Young Leaders

"You matter. Not because of your grades. Not because of your achievements. Not because of how many friends, followers, awards, or accomplishments you have. You matter because you are a unique human being with gifts, talents, ideas, and potential that no one else possesses in quite the same way."
— Diane Hagopian

The world often tells young people to focus on being popular, successful, entertained, or accepted. But here is a different challenge: **Focus on becoming the kind of person you admire.**

Be Trustworthy

Keep your word. Treat others with kindness and respect. Have the courage to stand up for what is right, even when it is difficult.

Lead Yourself First

True leadership begins with how you lead yourself. Every day you are making choices that shape the person you are becoming — the books you read, the friends you choose, the habits you practice.

Think for Yourself

Do not blindly follow the crowd. Ask questions. Seek truth. Read widely. Listen carefully. Learn how to think, not merely what to think.

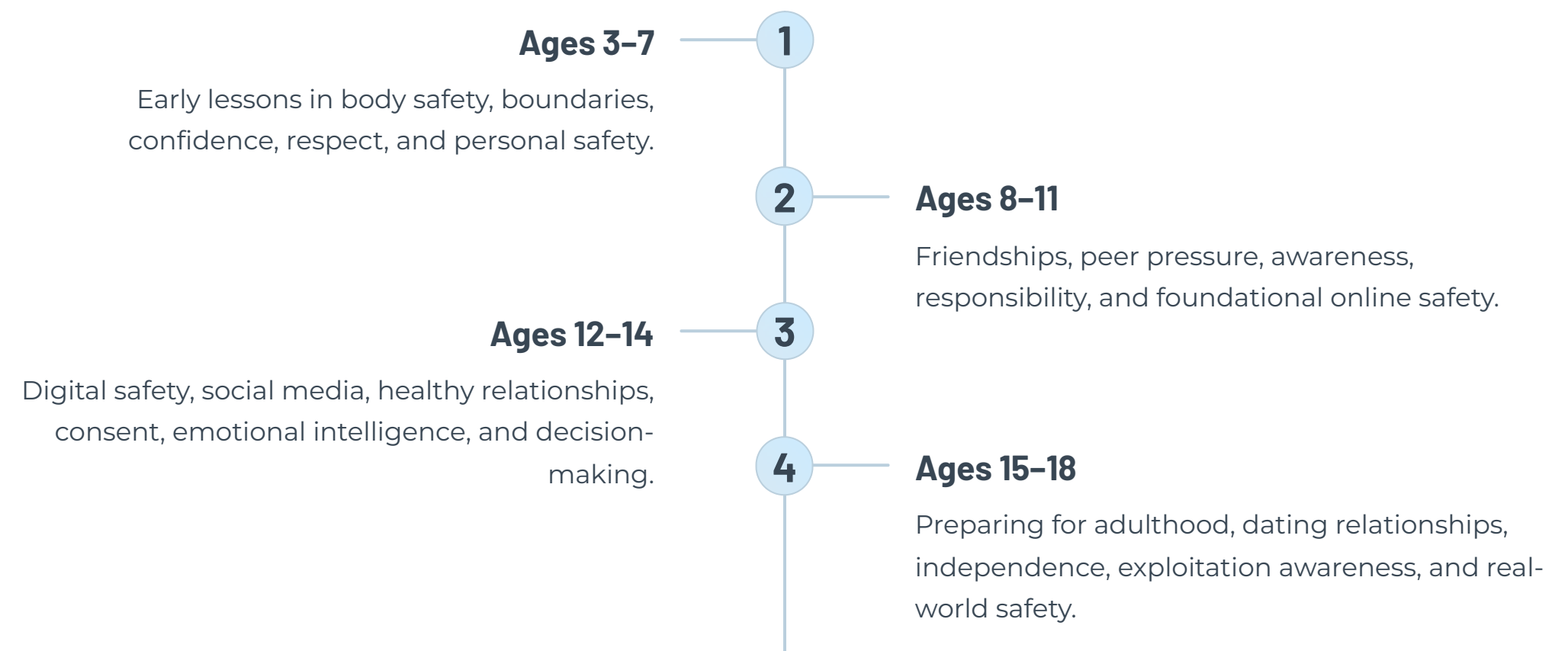
Embrace Failure as a Teacher

When you make mistakes — and you will — learn from them and keep moving forward. Greatness is usually built through thousands of small decisions made consistently over time.

☐ Your life has purpose. You can make a difference in your family, your friendships, your school, and your community. Small acts of integrity, courage, kindness, and leadership often create ripple effects far beyond what we can see. **The world needs more leaders of character — and I believe you can be one of them.**

Continue the Journey

The principles in this Starter Guide are intended to help families build a strong foundation of safety, character, confidence, responsibility, and wisdom. For parents who would like additional guidance, the complete **Parent Safety & Character Handbook** expands upon these ideas with age-specific recommendations and practical implementation strategies.



Additional Topics in the Complete Handbook

- Technology & Social Media Standards
- Public Safety & Emergency Preparedness
- Family Safety Planning
- Home Security
- Family Technology Agreements
- Emergency Preparedness Tools
- Conversation Prompts
- Coaching & Leadership Development
- And much more

About HoistPoint

At **HoistPoint**, we believe young people are capable of far more than society often expects of them. Our mission is to help cultivate wisdom, character, confidence, leadership, and purpose in the next generation. Through educational resources, leadership development, coaching, and our **Leaders to Legends** program, we seek to equip young people not only to succeed, but to lead meaningful lives and positively influence the world around them.

5

Core Parts

Foundations, Awareness, Technology, Home Culture, and Life Preparation

4

Age Groups

Tailored guidance from ages 3 through 18 in the complete Handbook

3

Essential Traits

Respect, Integrity, and Courage — the character foundation

🔗 To learn more about HoistPoint and future resources, visit: www.hoistpoint.com

"The future is shaped not only by institutions, policies, or technology. It is shaped by families. It is shaped by parents who choose to invest time, energy, and intention into raising the next generation." — Diane Hagopian, Founder, **HoistPoint**



Scan or Click the QR code above to learn more about HoistPoint's Leadership Program.

HoistPoint Family Safety Rules Supplement

A Note to Parents

"No guide can eliminate every risk. The purpose of these suggestions is not to create fear, but to help families think proactively about safety in a rapidly changing world. The goal is not fear — the goal is wisdom."
— Diane Hagopian, HoistPoint

Many of today's threats look different than they did a generation ago. While stranger danger remains important, many risks now involve technology, online grooming, social media, peer pressure, and individuals who have gained a child's trust. Consider these suggestions a starting point for discussion. Review these Safety Rules once a month with your child and post them somewhere in your home.

Parent Safety Guidelines

Create a Family Safety Plan

Ensure children know their full name, address, parent phone numbers, emergency contacts, what to do if lost, and where to go in an emergency. Review the plan regularly.

Secure Your Home

Consider exterior cameras, alarm systems, outdoor lighting, and locked doors and windows. Teach children never to open the front door without a parent's permission.

Monitor Children's Technology

Children should not have unrestricted internet access. Know what devices they use, which apps are installed, who they communicate with, and what content they consume. Limit recreational screen time to under two hours per day when practical.

Smartphone & Online Safety

Delay Smartphones as Long as Possible

Smartphones provide unrestricted access to social media, pornography, online predators, cyberbullying, and addictive algorithms. Many families delay smartphone ownership until age 17 or 18, choosing child-focused devices with monitoring and safety controls during adolescence.

Understand the Risk of Online Content

- Search engines and social media
- Video platforms and online games
- Messaging apps and advertisements
- Friends' and family members' devices

Many children encounter explicit content during elementary school — often accidentally. Do not assume parental controls are enough. No filter is perfect.

Talking to Your Child About Online Safety

→ A Conversation Starter About Pornography

"One day you may see pictures or videos online of adult activities. These videos can be extremely harmful to you and your health. They will change your brain in harmful ways. These pictures and videos can also be harmful to the ones included because they are selling themselves short or did not consent. If that ever happens, you are not in trouble. Come talk to me."

→ Teach Children About Grooming

Most predators begin with extra attention, gifts, compliments, and emotional support — not threats. Children should understand that manipulation often looks friendly at first. Anyone who truly loves the child or cares about the child would not put make the child suffer.

→ Know Your Child's Teachers, Coaches, Doctors, Friends & Their Friends' Families

Many safety concerns originate through peers, not strangers. Know, but trust sparingly, those who your child spends time with, where, and what rules exist in those spaces. Many parents choose to forbid sleepovers or prohibit their children from being alone in a room with a doctor, nurse, or coach as these scenarios pose unnecessary risks to a child's wellbeing.

The 15 Family Safety Rules for Children

Review the Family Safety Plan and these rules once a month with your children, and post them somewhere in your home.

1. **Trust Your Intuition** — If something feels wrong, uncomfortable, or unsafe, tell a safe adult immediately. Your feelings or that soft whisper inside your mind are important.
2. **No Secrets From Parents** — Adults should never ask children to keep secrets from their parents. If someone tells you not to tell your parents, tell them immediately.
3. **Never Go Anywhere Without Permission** — Always ask your parent before leaving with another adult or older child, even if you know them or they say there is an emergency or package for you. Even in the home, you should not answer the front door without an adult.
4. **Ask Before Accepting Gifts, Food, Money, or Rides** — Always check with your parent first. Safe adults will understand and respect this rule. Never get in a car with a stranger, even if they say they know your parents.
5. **Stay With Friends or Family** — Whenever possible, stay with your group. Being with others is often safer than being alone. Use the buddy system if going to places like locker rooms, restrooms, or even walking to school.
6. **Be Careful Online** — Never share your address, school name, phone number, passwords, photos, daily routines, or location. The internet remembers more than you think.
7. **Safety Is More Important Than Politeness** — You are allowed to say "No," walk away, get help, make noise, or leave a situation. Protecting yourself is more important than being polite.
8. **Know Your Safe Adults** — Every child should know several safe adults they can contact if they need help. Make a list with your parents and review it often.
9. **Tell a Parent If Someone Makes You Uncomfortable** — Even if you know the person. Even if they seem nice. You will not get in trouble for speaking up.
10. **Be Aware of Your Surroundings** — Avoid walking while staring at your phone. Remove headphones when walking near cars or in unfamiliar places, and always look twice before crossing the street.
11. **Be Aware of Public Spaces** — Avoid isolated areas, abandoned buildings, and public bathrooms alone when young. Stay where safe people are present.
12. **Guns Are Not Toys** — If you ever find a firearm: do not touch it, leave the area, and tell a safe adult immediately.
13. **You Will Never Be In Trouble For Asking For Help** — Your safety is more important than avoiding embarrassment. If you are scared, confused, or unsure, ask for help.
14. **Violence Is a Last Resort** — Do not bully others. If someone is bullying you, tell a safe adult. Use words, boundaries, and trusted adults whenever possible.
15. **Help Create Your Safe Adult List** — Your opinion matters. If someone makes you uncomfortable, tell your parents. This should be a family conversation.

 **Maintain Open Communication** — Children should know they can come to you with mistakes, questions, embarrassing situations, online experiences, and concerns about adults. The strongest protection is often a trusting parent-child relationship.

Family Discussion & Resources

Family Discussion Questions

What would you do if someone asked you to keep a secret?

What would you do if someone offered you a ride?

What would you do if you became lost in a store?

What would you do if someone online asked for a photo?

What would you do if an adult asked you not to tell your parents something?

Who are the safe adults you can contact if you need help?

Practice your answers together as a family.

Resources Parents May Wish to Explore

- Bark Phones — child-focused communication and monitoring
- ASUS routers — family filtering and network controls
- Noonlight — personal safety services
- Content filtering and parental control software
- Router-level internet filtering
- Device monitoring tools

 Technology can support safety, but no tool replaces active parenting, supervision, and communication.

Final Thought

"Children cannot be protected from every challenge they may encounter. However, they can be equipped with awareness, good judgment, strong character, and the confidence to seek help when they need it. Safety is not a single conversation. It is an ongoing process of preparation, communication, wisdom, and trust."

 To learn more about HoistPoint and future resources, visit: www.hoistpoint.com