

That's an important topic. The infographic shows that the "stranger danger" concept, while well-intentioned, doesn't tell the whole story. Most abductions are carried out by people the child knows, which is why experts recommend a more nuanced approach.

Instead of focusing only on "strangers," it's more effective to teach children about what's considered **safe vs. unsafe behavior**, regardless of who the person is.

Here's how to have that conversation:

Key Principles for Talking to Your Child

- **Reframe the Conversation:** Start by explaining that most people are good and that it's okay to talk to people you know. The real danger isn't just with strangers, but with anyone who tries to trick or coerce you.
- **Teach Them to Trust Their "Uh-Oh" Feeling:** This is a crucial concept. Explain that their body has a built-in alarm that goes off when something feels wrong. Tell them to always trust that feeling and to get to a safe place immediately.
- **Establish a "Safe Word":** Pick a secret word or phrase that only you and your child know. Explain that if someone they don't know tries to pick them up, they should only go with that person if they use the safe word. This removes any confusion.
- **Create a Circle of Trust:** Help your child identify their trusted adults—family members, teachers, coaches, and close family friends. Explain that if they are ever in trouble or feel uncomfortable, they should go to one of those people.
- **Teach Them How to Say "No":** Practice different scenarios where they need to say no to an adult, like if an adult asks them to keep a secret, do something that feels wrong, or go somewhere they don't want to go. Empower them to be assertive and to tell a trusted adult immediately.

What to Practice with Your Child

- **Scream, Run, and Yell:** Teach them to make a lot of noise and run away if someone tries to grab them. Practice yelling "This is not my parent!" or "Help me!"
- **The "Lure" of Help:** Explain common tricks, like someone asking for help to find a lost pet or asking them to come see a new toy. Tell them to never go with a person, even if they seem friendly and are asking for help.
- **Safe Places:** Identify public places where they can get help, like stores, restaurants, or the homes of people in their Circle of Trust.

The most important thing is to keep the conversation ongoing. Make it a normal part of your discussions about safety, so it doesn't feel like a scary, one-time lecture.