PERSONAL SAFETY

Personal safety is an important part of our daily lives. Staying safe isn't really a separate “issue”, it is just part of everything we do. When we are at home or at work, going to school, hanging out with friends, driving a car, or on a date—we are constantly making choices that affect how safe we will be. That is why you will find information about ways to stay safe in many sections of this book, for example:

- Protecting yourself from AIDS
- Avoiding ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS
- Taking a stand against BULLYING
- Preventing DATE RAPE
- Recognizing DEPRESSION
- Staying on the right side of THE LAW AND YOU
- Forming safe RELATIONSHIPS
- Help when you feel like RUNNING AWAY
- Recovering from SEXUAL ABUSE
- Preventing SEXUAL ASSAULT OR RAPE
- Protecting yourself from SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES
- Preventing SUICIDE

Modern life presents some additional worries, which no one used to give much thought. For example, being safe on the internet means you take precautions. Internet searching, chatting, instant messaging, buying online, are all fairly new ways to get ourselves into dangerous situations. Millions of people go online every day, without ever being victimized. But the smart person ALWAYS takes care on the internet. Here’s how:

“Rules for Life”*

In general, most people you meet in real life won’t harm you. It doesn’t make sense to fear everyone you meet. It DOES make sense to avoid people who approach you at school, or where you work, live, worship or play, if they make you feel uncomfortable in ANY WAY. But according to THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING & EXPLOITED CHILDREN, fearing strangers isn’t the best way for you to stay safe. Instead, try always to remember this:

You are smart. You are strong. You know what is going on.
You know that, in real life, there are rules to live by.
Rules that remind you, like a little voice inside of you, of these questions:
“Hey, do I really want to do this?” “Do I really want to go there?”

These are your rules for life.
1. Don’t go out alone.
2. Always tell an adult were you’re going.
3. It’s YOUR body.
4. Say NO if you feel threatened, and tell a trusted adult.

These rules are pretty BASIC, pretty common sense. Yeah, yeah, you’ve heard them a million times, but have you every really LISTENED to them? Have you ever really thought about what they mean?

*Rules for Life are reprinted here with permission from THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING & EXPLOITED CHILDREN, website at www.missingkids.com
DON'T GO OUT ALONE. THINK ABOUT IT before you go out. Remember that if you can avoid situations that put you at risk in the first place, you're already one step ahead.

ALWAYS TELL AN ADULT WHERE YOU'RE GOING. THINK ABOUT IT. Never Ever go somewhere with someone you don't know. This includes hitching rides. This includes babysitting for anyone without getting information about the family like where they live and even some references about them FIRST. Leave a telephone number and an address with your family BEFORE you go.

IT'S YOUR BODY. You're constantly having to make decisions about yourself and are faced with peer pressure about anything from who your friends are to exposure to drugs and sex. One more time: THINK ABOUT IT.

SAY NO IF YOU FEEL THREATENED, AND TELL A TRUSTED ADULT. Don’t be afraid to stand up for yourself. Listen to your intuition and follow your best judgment. If your friends are making bad decisions, you don’t have to. Have the confidence to say NO if ANYONE makes you feel uncomfortable about ANYTHING. And remember, it’s never too late for you to tell an adult if something is bothering you.

Now you know the rules. You may have always known them, but now you can really get them. They’re like bells that go off in your head when you’re faced with a risky situation. They can’t get you out of every tough spot, but they might keep you from getting into one.

Missing Children

THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING & EXPLOITED CHILDREN tells us that the largest number of missing children are “runaways”; followed by “family abductions”; then “lost, injured, or otherwise missing children”; and finally, the smallest category, but the one in which someone is at greatest risk of injury or death, “non-family abductions.” In the event that a young person goes missing, under any circumstances, it may be helpful for the family to have identifying information to help deploy law enforcement, the media, and the Amber Alert System as soon as possible. Two local programs that help make this possible are:

SafeAssured ID Program……………………………… www.safeassured-id.com
Offers parent a record of key information about their child that police could use if the child were lost or kidnapped. Customers receive a miniature compact disk that has digital fingerprint scans, a physical description, audio and video recordings of the child, and other identifying information.

Secure ID……………………………………………715.627.6411
Prints computer-generated identification cards that parents can carry in case their children are ever reported missing. Cards contain the child’s photo, thumbprint, name, height, weight, date of birth, hair and eye color, and their parents’ names and address.

Langlade County Sheriff’s Office and Antigo Police Departments both offer child identification programs for parents to record and keep identifiable information of their children, should the information become needed.

For more information about staying safe, log on to THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING & EXPLOITED CHILDREN website: www.missingkids.com.