

10 Lessons That Can Keep Your Kids Out of Harm's Way

I was around 5 years old and over at a friend's house. My friend's mom was about to take us some place fun so we got into the car.

This was back in the day where people didn't think about car safety and kids could sit anywhere. So, even though we were only 5, he was in the front and I was in the back. His mom started driving out of the driveway, which sloped uphill. When she got out of the car to check the mailbox, my friend had the bright idea to move the gear stick from 'P' to 'N'. The next thing I knew we were moving backward with his mom running after us. Fortunately, his mom was able to jump in and push the brake, which was the only thing that kept us from toppling over into a small ravine.

Children, to put it mildly, can do the dumbest things and, even a 30-second lack in judgment can haunt our children for a lifetime. Here are a few helpful ideas to keep your kids from doing dumb things and, hopefully, ease your pain.

1. Online dangers. The whole world is on the internet—the good, bad and the dangerous. A child can get in serious trouble in a hurry. By all means, be aware of your child's online activity. Some filters can be helpful, but they can't block everything. There is no room for you to bury your head in the sand on this one. Talk to your kids openly about the dangers they could encounter. Then follow that up with eyes like a hawk at all times. Start with making them do their online surfing in the living room, not their bedroom.

2. The apple doesn't fall far from the tree. We inherit much from our parents. This includes tendencies. Plenty of bad ideas you once came up with as a kid will be attempted by your

child as well. The best way to catch a criminal is to think like one, right? Same thing applies here. Try to remember the world through the eyes of a 12-year-old. It will be very beneficial in preventing things before they ever occur.

3. The famous money tree. We all wish it existed. Of course, it does not. Children, especially teenagers, tend to treat money like it can never run out. Sadly, many adults do as well. Teach your children the importance of money management. Give them an allowance that is earned by designated chores. Money falling from trees is never going to happen.

4. Loose lips sink ships. Everyone has said things in their life they would like to take back. Mom was right. *If you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all.* Being honest and straightforward is great. However, tactfulness and politeness are equally important. Teach your children to control their tongues. This one trait can take a person far in life. It's called "not burning bridges."

5. The cell phone blues. The mobile phone has become a permanent part of our being. It's like an extra limb. Yes, they are helpful and awesome in many ways. They are also a great way to get into a lot of trouble for your children. "Sexting" has become a major problem among teens. It is very important you discuss and monitor the cell phone use of your kids.

6. Thinking a couple moves ahead. Teach your children how to think through the consequences of their actions. Walk them through progressions in their minds by asking questions, such as, "What will happen if you do 'X'? How will people react? What will you do then?" Play strategy games together that train their brains to think a couple moves ahead.

7. The importance of choosing friends. The people your kids spend their time with have a great deal of influence on them. Have the discussion about friend selection with your children.

It's best to have that talk before you are rushing them to the hospital or receiving a call from the school.

8. Teach them manners. "Don't talk with your mouth full." "Inside voices!" "The proper term is yes, sir!" Manners are somewhat of a lost art in our society. It seems there are so many battles to fight this one gets shoved aside. Then it rears its ugly head at a neighborhood dinner party. You are mortified at the behavior of your kids—a horrible feeling for a parent. Enforce the most basic of manners in your household at all times. Teach them the meaning of respect.

9. Safeguard your home. We can't shelter our kids from all dangers, but we can prevent a lot of unnecessary accidents. If you own guns, make sure they are locked up. Keep medicine, household cleaning products and pointy things out of their reach. They all have their place and it's not in the hands of an unknowing child. Safeguard your home.

10. Lying in the bed you made. The surefire way to prevent your kids from doing dumb things is by allowing them to experience the consequences of their actions. "You made your bed, now lie in it." It is imperative that you discipline your children, however difficult and sometimes heartbreaking it is to do. Disciplining a child is a great act of love by a parent. {eo}

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