

SRO Talking Points

STRANGERS

- A stranger is just simply a person that you do NOT know.
- Everywhere you go: grocery store, mall, restaurant, the zoo, Zoombeezi Bay or an Ohio State Buckeye football game, you will be surrounded by strangers
- “Are most strangers (people we do not know) good or bad?
(Ask students this and most in younger grades will say they are bad)
- Real Answer: MOST strangers are good...BUT, we just don’t know who they are.
- EXAMPLE:
 - 1) If my best friend in the whole wide world, named Steve Miller walked in this room right now, how many of you would know him. So, if none of you know him that means that he is a....stranger. Are you saying that my good friend, Steve, is a bad just because you don’t know him? I hope you don’t think that because he’s a great person.
- ACTIVITY:

Let me call a student up. Do the boys and girls in this classroom know your parents. “No, they don’t.” So if your parents walked in this room right now they would be... strangers.

Now, let me ask you this question...are your parents good or bad?
“They are good.” Okay, so the rest of you, raise your hands if your parents are good...now raise your parents if your parents are bad. So, that means that most strangers are.....good!
- It also does NOT matter what someone looks like or how they dress. That’s not what makes someone good or bad. What makes someone good or bad is how they feel in their...heart.
- ACTIVITY/EXAMPLES:
 - 1) If you saw a man, and he’s a stranger, and he’s wearing a suit and tie, and his hair is cut short and he’s clean shaven and he’s holding a briefcase. He looks very professional and looks like he’s going to work at his office, but you don’t know him:
 - a. Raise your hand if you think he’s good ...
 - b. Raise your hand if you think he’s bad...
 - c. Now raise your hand if you think the best answer is “we don’t know if he’s good or bad because he’s a stranger.” That’s RIGHT, and that’s always the best answer.

- 2) If you saw a woman and she's pretty and she's wearing a beautiful dress with prints of colorful flowers on it but you don't know her:
 - a. Raise your hand if you think she's good ...
 - b. Raise your hand if you think she's bad...
 - c. Now raise your hand if you've caught on to the game and the best answer is always... "Well we don't know if she's good or bad because she's a stranger."
- 3) One more example: what if you see a man and he's a stranger, and he has hair down to his shoulders, and he has a thick beard and mustache and he has a tattoo on his neck, and he's wearing a black leather jacket, and he has jeans with rips and tears in them and boots that come up to his knees....and he's riding a loud motorcycle:
 - a. Raise your hand if you think he's good...
 - b. Raise your hand if you think he's bad... (most kids say bad)
 - c. Now raise your hand if you think, "Well we don't know if he's good or bad because he's a stranger. Yes! that's always the right answer. The biker guy might be the nicest guy you've ever met!

I also used to work with another deputy named Scott at another sheriff's office that I worked at years ago. We used to wear the same uniform. At the end of the day though, Scott would change out of his uniform and this is what he would dress like. He would wear a black leather jacket, black leather pants, tall boots with spurs on them, a wallet with a chain. This guy even wore an earring....and he rode a loud but beautiful Harley Davidson motorcycle. Now, if you didn't know Scott and I described him to you, most of you would say he was bad because of how he looked. But Scott was a very nice person. So again, it's now how someone looks but rather what's inside of their heart that makes them good or bad.

- Here's some good news: it's not your job to figure out who the good strangers are and who the bad strangers are. Your job is to treat every single stranger exactly the same way – like you don't know them! So we need to learn some rules, some of which you've already heard from your parents.
- Raise your hand if your parents have ever told you, "Don't talk to strangers." We do not talk to people that we do not know. If we don't know them they've got no business knowing you. We don't tell strangers our name, where we live, what school we go to, our phone number, or anything.
- Raise your hand if your parents have ever told you, "don't take things from strangers." We do not take things like candy, money or other gifts from people that we do not know. The reason we have this rule is because sometimes the bad

strangers may try to trick you into thinking they are a good stranger. And one way they do that is by giving you candy or a gift. Just because a stranger gives you something does NOT mean they are good. Do not take the candy or gift.

- Now, let's stop there for a moment. I just said we don't talk to or take things from strangers. But, what's one of our most favorite holidays that comes every October. That's right, Halloween and what's the one night we get to go out and ask for candy...trick or treating. Now let me ask you a question. On the night of trick or treat did you talk to strangers? Yes, you did talk to strangers and on top of it you asked them to give you what? Candy. But that breaks our two rules because I said you shouldn't talk to strangers and you shouldn't take candy from them. But, on the night of trick or treat, and really any night for that matter, we might be able to talk to a stranger and we might be able to take candy from them as long as who is with us? Parents, correct. If mom and dad tells us it's okay to talk to a stranger or take their candy then it's okay.
- Here's another rule. Raise your hand if your parents have every told you. "don't go anywhere with someone that you do not know." We do not get into a car or go anywhere with someone that we do not know, no matter what they might say. If a stranger came to our school, would your teacher, principal or even the secretaries let that stranger take you from school? Of course not!
- Now, I have one more rule, except instead of calling this a rule, I like to call it a job. Who wants a job? Great, now this job doesn't pay any money but if you agree to take this job and you do it seriously it will help keep you safe. Are you ready to hear what the job is? Great, here it is....everywhere you are, everywhere you go, doesn't matter where it is, the zoo, mall, or even your front yard, your job is to stay close to your parents because their job is to keep you safe.
- Bad strangers will not bother you if you are practicing good safety and are with a trusted adult. In fact, if you are anywhere and there happens to be a bad stranger there, you won't even know it. Because they will take one look at you from a distance and say to themselves, now there's a kid that I can't talk to, hurt or take because they are practicing good safety and are with an adult that they know and trust.
- So what do bad strangers look for? Well, they look for children that are not practicing good safety. And what does that mean? Well, if you are that child who is allowed to ride your bike up and down your street or around your neighborhood BY YOURSELF, you are not practicing good safety. If you are allowed to play in your front yard BY YOURSELF, and maybe your parents are home but inside then

unfortunately none of you are practicing good safety. And one more example and this is one that kids keep bringing up to me, so let's talk about it. Raise your hand if you've ever been to a restaurant with your mom and dad. Now, raise your hand if in the middle of the meal you had to go to the restroom. Now raise your hand, if you are allowed to get up from the dinner table BY YOURSELF and go to the restroom. If you are allowed to do that you are not practicing good safety. Do bad stranger go to restaurants, do bad strangers go to the bathroom...yes they do so it's safest to always have a parent with you.

- Now I'm not saying that if you ride your bike by yourself, or if you play outside or go to the restroom at a restaurant by yourself that something bad is going to happen. More than likely you will be just fine and nothing will happen. But, it's not worth taking that risk and we will always be safest with mom and dad.
- Here's the part of the class where I have to bend the rules a little bit. Because there could be a time where you are out somewhere with your parents and family. And it doesn't matter if this place is big or small, indoor or outdoor, crowded or not. And you look around and suddenly you realized that you cannot find your parents and YOU ARE LOST. If you are lost, you may very well need the help of a stranger. I want to make sure you are asking for help from the right stranger.
- If you're lost in a store, such as Wal-Mart, Meijer, Kohl's, Target, and you are lost, the best thing to do is to walk to the front of the store to that big area called the CHECKOUT and find someone who works there. Is the worker a stranger? Yes, unless it's your Aunt Julie or your Uncle Bob, and it's probably not, chances are the worker is a stranger. But, should we be able to trust a stranger who works at the store...yes, we should be.
- How can we tell if someone works at the store? Well, at Wal-Mart, every worker wears a vest with no sleeves over their shirt. What color is that vest...blue, Meijer...red, Lowe's...blue, Home Depot...orange...Menards...green, and at Target all workers wear the same color shirt...what color is it? Red.
- At some stores they may not wear a special shirt, vest, or uniform. So, if you get lost in the Polaris Mall, for example, just walk into the closest store, find someone who appears to work there, maybe someone whose helping customers, or using the cash register, or wearing a name badge and ask them if they work there. If they do, they will know exactly who to call to get you help.
- If you get lost somewhere like Zoombezi Bay or a pool...what do we call the person who works at these places whose job it is to keep us safe? That's right, it's a lifeguard. And is the lifeguard a stranger? Yes, unless it's your Aunt Tracy or your

Uncle Dave, the lifeguard is actually a stranger but is that a stranger you should be able to trust....yes it is.

- One more thing: what if you get lost somewhere like a park and nobody is working there. The only people there are folks who are jogging, riding their bikes or walking their dogs. And you got separated from your parents and need help finding them? If that happens, I want you to look for one of two things.
 - 1) The first thing to find, if you can, is another MOMMY. If you can find another mommy who has children with her, maybe even pushing one in a baby stroller, then that mommy would be a great stranger to ask for help.
 - 2) And, if you can't find another mommy, find someone who is older and who reminds you of your grandparents. Maybe someone with gray hair.

So, tell your parents what you learned today and have them give you more safety tips on how to deal with strangers.