

…myfriends, in the words of (and a flashback to 80's TV is needed here) Sergeant Esterhaus, "Hey, let's be careful out there." Because it is a dangerous world we are living in.

The more one reads or watches the news these days the sicker one gets. While switching through the news channels last night, my hubby and I were talking about how incredibly bad things have gotten. So many people, all ages, disappearing or being found dead, if they are found at all; kids, teenagers, being abused, assaulted, and so on. No need for statistics here, it's simply sickening.

When it comes to the issue of safety, typically, with us, it has been the practice to keep our children at arm's length at all times, and consequently why we usually travel in a pack. Aside from the fact that we have always enjoyed our kids' company, we feel a bit more relaxed when they are with us, under our blanket, if you will. I realize this borders paranoia sometimes, but we can't help it, we seemingly haven't been able to "let go," much to the criticism of some, but we like it that way. So we've always thought ourselves as cautious parents, aware of our children's surroundings and what have you.

Then, last night while talking about some of the horrific cases we had watched while channel surfing, we flashed back to some of our hotel stays during our travels when we have sometimes let the kids go down the hall to fill up the ice buckets, and other times, although seldom, go up to the room by themselves to get something while we wait inthe lobby. All of a sudden, panic set in upon the realization that what has seemed in the past like such a harmless and safe thing to do, can be so life-threatening nowadays. Let me tell you something: we are NOT doing that anymore. We can't. Particularly since during our long trips we often travel through many small and peculiar towns where we make stops. Just thinking about that last night made the hair in back of my neck stand up. I came out of the TV room and called them both to the hall and stood them there and said to them with the utmost level of urgency: "Listen up kids, new rule in effect: from now on neither one of you is to…… specifically when you go out or travel with someone other than us." I mean, when

things are meant to happen, undoubtedly they will happen, but I don't want to put ourselves in a position where we would facilitate these occurrences for the evil doers out there. Not on our watch if we can help it, you know what I mean?

It is unfortunate that we have to live so afraid for our children, for their safety and wellbeing. But that's the reality. Some of you reading this have teenagers, who, as it turns out, are the hardest ones to educate and/or convince about this safety issue, as well as other issues, particularly the dangers they are exposed to through technology, i.e. the internet. That, in and of itself, is a nightmare and something we must stay on top of constantly. Don't ever think that danger can't reach out of a computer screen and grab your kids. It most certainly can, just watch the news, namely last night's segment regarding 8 teens accused of kidnapping and assaulting another teen, resulting from comments posted on MySpace.

Often our kids don't want to understand the restrictions we impose on them, be it social or intellectual. They think they know everything and believe themselves invincible and immune to any of the dangers lurking about. Be that as it may, we must educate them and open their eyes to what's out there and help them stay safe. Even when our children don't live with us anymore, are away at college, or whatever the case may be, as parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, we must not think twice about staying involved and drilling our kids on these issues. No matter how repetitive they say we sound, it is critical that we remain relentless.

Of course we pray, of course we trust God and put ourselves and mostly our children in His hands. But at the end of the day, it is our responsibility to keep our children's safety and wellbeing on the front burner, all the time. "Train a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Proverbs 22:6.

Let's be conscious of this privilege, and duty, given to us by our Lord, and teach and train them well. And most of all people, let's be careful out there.

-by Connie Perez

Children miss nothing in sizing up their parents. If you are only half convinced of your beliefs, they will quickly discern that fact. Any ethical weak spot-any indecision on your part-will be incorporated and then magnified in your sons and daughters. Their faith or faithlessness will be a reflection of our own.

– Dr. James Dobson

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