



# Protecting the Gift: Keeping Children and Teenagers Safe (and Parents Sane)

*Gavin de Becker*

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Safety skills for children outside the home  
Warning signs of sexual abuse  
How to screen baby-sitters and choose schools  
Strategies for keeping teenagers safe from violence

All parents face the same challenges when it comes to their children's safety: whom to trust, whom to distrust, what to believe, what to doubt, what to fear, and what not to fear. In this empowering book, Gavin de Becker, the nation's leading expert on predicting violent behavior and author of the monumental bestseller *The Gift of Fear*, offers practical new steps to enhance children's safety at every age level, giving you the tools you need to allow your kids freedom without losing sleep yourself. With daring and compassion, he shatters the widely held myths about danger and safety and helps parents find some certainty about life's highest-stakes questions:

How can I know a baby-sitter won't turn out to be someone who harms my child? (see page 103)  
What should I ask child-care professionals when I interview them? (see page 137)  
What's the best way to prepare my child for walking to school alone? (see page 91)  
How can my child be safer at school? (see page 175)  
How can I spot sexual predators? (see page 148)  
What should I do if my child is lost in public? (see page 86)  
How can I teach my child about risk without causing too much fear? (see page 98)  
What must my teenage daughter know in order to be safe? (see page 191)  
What must my teenage son know in order to be safe? (see page 218)  
And finally, in the face of all these questions, how can I reduce the worrying? (see page 56)

## Protecting the Gift: Keeping Children and Teenagers Safe (and Parents Sane) Details

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## From Reader Review Protecting the Gift: Keeping Children and Teenagers Safe (and Parents Sane) for online ebook

### Sherry Elmer says

Parents, PLEASE read this book!

You probably won't "want" to read it. I certainly didn't. But, as author Gavin de Becker says, denial is not a good defensive strategy. There are real dangers to our children. Learning what these are, and more importantly, learning what to do to reduce the risks, is an important task for parents and for anyone who loves children.

When I first started reading Protecting the Gift, I felt more worried than ever at the dangers lurking "out there." By the time I'd finished, I felt much more confident that I will be able to recognize and deal with situations as they arise. The greatest take-away is trust your intuition; do not reason or rationalize it away.

These were a couple of my favorite quotes from the book:

"Just as intuition protects us from danger, denial protects us from something too: unwanted information. Denial serves to eliminate the discomfort of accepting realities we'd rather not acknowledge. There are times this protection is valuable for emotional survival, but it is rarely useful for physical survival--and it's downright destructive to the safety of children."

"Of all the lessons a mother might pass to her daughter, the most valuable can be summed up with just two letters: N-O."

"The fact that a romantic pursuer is relentless doesn't mean you are special--it means he is troubled."

Our children deserve a better and safer world. This book is one tool to help us move in the right direction.

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### Haley says

I'm surprised at all the high praise for this book. I had a rough time getting through it because I was so bored. Especially in the beginning, I thought the writing was disorganized and could have been condensed quite a bit. Also, this book was written almost 20 years ago, so the book just felt outdated the whole time while I was reading it. At the same time, I realize that the statistics are probably even worse today.

However, I ended up giving it an extra star because I did take some things away from the book that prompted discussions with my kids. I thought the chapter on intuition (Holy Ghost) was important as well as re-defining "Don't talk to strangers."

I thought it was interesting to learn of the author's background and the abusive environment he grew up in. It is empowering that he was able to rise above it in the sense that he knew it wasn't his fault and that he (I gather) didn't follow into the same patterns he experienced in his youth.

The chapters on child abuse were absolutely heart-breaking and difficult to read. Children are so trusting and so innocent that it is sickening that parents take advantage of that unconditional love. I liked the last quote in the book: "In a very real sense, children give every parent a gold container filled with unconditional love. In

return, we can protect children knowing that love grows best in safe places." Children absolutely deserve to grow up in a loving environment, and it makes me really sad that this doesn't happen nearly as often as it should. After reading this section of the book, it was a great reminder to have a little more patience and compassion for my own children.

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## Danielle says

Gavin de Becker makes a lot of good points about keeping our children safe, and it's a quick and painless read. Here are some of the important points that I got out of it:

- our intuition about people and situations is the most important tool we have to protect ourselves, and many (most) people ignore their intuition because they do not want to accept reality.
- the reality is that stranger abductions are incredibly rare, and worrying about this rare phenomenon takes valuable energy and attention away from the reality right under our noses:
- the people most likely to harm our children are people we know. something like one in three children are harmed by someone known to their family (usually sexual abuse), and no one ever suspected. but if they were paying attention, the signs were there and they would have known.
- fear is useful when it spurs us to action. worry that doesn't lead to any action is useless and actually damaging.
- women have the power to protect themselves and their children from violence. teenage girls can also protect themselves, but it helps to have feelings of self worth and people who believe them.
- it is possible (and important) to determine who can be trusted to take care of our children, and keep them safe from harm

There's more...

I enjoyed reading this book and feel that I got a lot out of it. However, I have a few criticisms. The author talks about how the media makes certain types of violence seem more common than they really are, and makes us unnecessarily afraid (to our detriment). But I got the feeling that the examples given in this book were doing the exact same thing. Some of them were very good and instructive, but others seemed to go against the author's point.

Also I felt that the editing could have been better. Like most parenting books, this one just isn't that tight. Some of the chapters do not hold together well, and seem to meander around a point that is hard to ascertain. But this is a minor complaint about a book that I still believe every parent and caregiver should read.

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## Sunni says

Not an easy read, but important. So glad I went ahead. This book made me think about my own levels of "politeness" as a female and whether sometimes I should err on the side of impoliteness, bitchiness be damned.

It's interesting to think of the different reaction I might have had to the annoying magazine seller in the Target parking lot who approached me and my baby had I read this book before I met him instead of after. I'm sure he was harmless, but I think I would have cut off the encounter quickly and curtly, which I did not in the moment. Instead I stood there awkwardly with Rory waiting for a moment to say, "no thanks" and move on.

I'm amazed at de Becker's compassionate forthrightness about his own difficult childhood, his frank assessment that "people do bad things" and his conviction that change can be effected by the very act of accepting the reality we live in and moving forward from that point (rather than staying in denial).

So glad I read this - would recommend to anyone and not just parents especially in light of de Becker's assurance that it takes a community to keep children safe.

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## Missy says

This book is changing my life! I knew it would be good, but I didn't know it would read like a thriller...The first pages, anyway. :) I recommend it to every parent everywhere. And also to anyone who knows kids. Seriously, I bring it up in conversations frequently.

Now that I've finished, here's what I want to note:

We already have what what is necessary to protect ourselves and our kids. It is the whispers of intuition. We need to listen more to our wild brain, which is unfettered by emotion, politics, and politeness. Too often we give control to our logic brain, which is burdened by judgment, slow to accept reality, and spends valuable time and energy thinking about how things ought to be, used to be, or could be.

Often we worry about outcomes that are not likely (see goodreads quote about lava). "Worry is not a precaution; it is the opposite because it delays and discourages constructive action." An exercise for excessive worriers is to ask highly specific questions about a given dreaded outcome, or mark the expected date on a calendar.

"Many parents go from worry to worry, never stopping long enough to see that their children are prevailing through life's challenges day in and day out. This is like surviving an air crash and then pausing at the top of the evacuation slide to worry about whether your luggage will make it on time. Sometimes, taking a moment for some gratitude keeps a few worries away."

"The best antidote to worry is action. Your choices when worrying are clear: take action, have faith, pray, seek comfort, or keep worrying."

If I'm worried, the best thing to do is acknowledge that I feel anxious about something, find some comfort, and move on without trying to build a case against the worry with my logic brain.

In order for a predator to nab my child, he needs ACE: access, cover, escape. What I can do to prevent this is: get close to my child or get him in view, taking care of access and cover, and place myself between my son and routes that lead away from public view, taking care of escape.

Women and girls should beware if they are alone with a man who has PC: privacy and control. Ask yourself how he got either of these, was it planned or coincidence, and how do you feel about it?

The Test of Twelve is a great list to help realize if your child is ready to be alone in public. My friend Teri Lund listed all twelve, so check out her review. Some important items are to make sure kids know they don't have to obey all adults, and it's okay to be rude or even violent if they feel they are in danger. If someone says "don't tell" or "don't yell", telling and yelling are exactly what they should do. All kids should know to fully resist going anywhere with someone they don't know, especially if that person is trying to persuade them. Your kids need to know that you as parents are strong enough to hear about any experience they've

had, no matter how unpleasant, and above all, kids should know to honor their feelings/intuition.

From the chapter on sexual predators: we need to teach our children about touch, the body, boundaries, communication, assertiveness, and sovereignty over the body.

Children should know that it's okay to withdraw consent at any time; their body is theirs; how to talk about the body; how to say No; to keep telling if nobody listens and if nobody makes it stop.

Tell children that no adult or other child should: put their hands down your pants/ up your skirt; touch your private parts, even through clothes or pajamas; ask you to touch their private parts or ask you to remove their clothes; take off your clothes; take pictures of you with your clothes off; take their clothes off in front of you.

One convicted child molester said "parents are partly to blame because they don't tell their children about sexual stuff. I used that to my advantage by teaching the child myself." According to one law-enforcement expert, a child who knows nothing about sex is a highly qualified victim.

Assertive kids are less likely to be molested. We need to teach kids to be comfortable with assertiveness. We can't shy away from teaching the dangers of sexual exploitation because we think it will frighten kids. Fear is diminished when prevention strategies are provided.

From the chapter on guns: we need to teach kids, especially boys, about guns. Know if there is a gun in the homes of your child's friends. Guns should always be LOCKED, not just locked in a cabinet. Never think that a gun won't be found by a child in your home.

"Just like adult men, young men in our culture are discouraged from showing emotion. Violent boys are frequently expressing what William Pollack calls 'the only *acceptable* male emotion--anger."

This book is an incredible resource for parents! I feel so empowered by De Becker's information, and although some of the vignettes were painful to read, I am able to spend less time on useless worry. I have taught my boys to look for a mom or a woman if they are lost, and we have talked about "tricky people" and listening to our instincts. I am less worried about politeness and more assertive about my duty to protect my two precious gifts.

I already knew that being alert and aware was important, but now I feel like I could take action in a stronger way. For instance, I can rebuff overly helpful guys who seem a little creepy. And while jogging, if I were being trailed by a man who seemed sketchy, rather than casting a glance over my shoulder and crossing the street, I feel like I could first turn and face him with a glare to let him know "I am no victim."

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## Cheryl says

This book helped me recognize the value of following my instincts - in ANY kind of potentially dangerous

situation, though it was focused on the situations surrounding children. It may seem like it would plant fears into the reader, but for me, it did just the opposite. He gave me plenty of info to allow me the freedom to celebrate fear and it's purpose, in dangerous situations, while recognizing when unfounded fears can cause unnecessary spin. He also provided some games to play with kids that can help them fine-tune their sense of observation, their ability to make wise judgements and follow their own instincts.

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## Topmar says

Everyone needs to read this book. Teach kids -- and yourself -- about human nature. Practical advice, smart writing, by a man who was once a neglected child. He's now a criminal profiler.

I spent years in the public arena working on a law designed to ferret out sex predators. The stuff I came across was unbelievable. If you don't think your kid can get trapped by a predator, you're naive. General example: Man approaches kid with some urgency, looking for lost kitten in the woods! Please help! Now! These men are crafty; prey on kids' empathy and cooperation.

But of course, most offenders are those the child knows. De Becker wants kids to be alert to "strange-ness" in situations rather than being alert to "strangers." Advises that kids are often told to do things, rather than having things done to them. Pushes intuitive development. If lost, go to a woman (sorry men, but facts are facts), not necessarily to a "manager" or security. If being abducted, scream, "This man is not my father" rather than just hollering, "No."

I'm now a de Becker preacher, apparently, and look forward to his book about fear.

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## Meg says

Right after reading this book, I went for a walk with my toddler, during which four strangers struck up conversations with us. Several of them probably would have set off many people's "uh-oh" alarms, like the scruffy-looking homeless guy pushing a shopping cart. All of them were really sweet and kind, had a short conversation with me and my child, and then moved on. Which leads to my point about this book: I appreciated the author's premise that we should trust our intuition about safety and should be in touch with our own internal danger signals, but he did not address two problems with this:

1. He focuses on all the times people felt an intuition of danger and they were right. But what about all the times they were wrong? He says you should not worry about unrealistic things - but never addresses the question of how to tell "unrealistic worry" from "true intuition."
2. He does not take into account racism, classism, and other prejudices and stereotypes that feel like "intuition" because they are so deeply ingrained in us from such a young age. If a white person responds to an unknown African American on the street with fear, is that their intuition? Probably not. It's probably based on societal racism (as manifested through media stereotypes, etc.). So how do we differentiate? I think this is really important. It's so easy to justify our stereotypes ("Oh, I was just listening to my gut feeling").

I liked that he emphasized that stranger kidnapping is extremely rare and that most danger comes from people you know. I wanted a little more filling-out of how to teach kids to recognize feelings of discomfort that might indicate a situation is "wrong." I also liked that he showed how the whole "Don't talk to strangers" idea doesn't actually promote safety, nor do some other things we commonly tell kids ("Find a police

officer"). He made some really good points about this, like for example: If your child is lost, they'll have a better chance of connecting with a safe adult if they choose someone than if they wait for someone to come up to them.

However, I had a lot of discomfort about the idea of telling your child "If you're lost/in trouble/etc., find a woman." I get his point that men statistically commit more violence. But at the same time, most men do not commit violence. Once again, it's really easy to justify our stereotypes (that women are safe and nurturing, men are aggressive and violent) by saying that they're based on some kind of natural order. Ultimately, it doesn't feel right to me to teach my child that women are to be trusted and men are not.

I thought some of his sample letters/ questions to ask were right on (I liked his suggestions of questions to ask potential babysitters); others felt a little overly confrontational and overly focused on the possibility of sexual abuse. Really - when you choose a pediatrician you're going to ask them a gazillion questions about sexual abuse assessment and reporting? You probably only have 15 minutes with them and you have other things you want to know about, like their overall philosophy, what they can tell you about sleeping, eating, and other primary concerns of new parents. Frankly, if I were a doctor and my patient asked me ten different questions about sexual abuse, I'd wonder what was going on.

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## Julia says

I say I read the book, but I really skimmed it for the most part....There were too many horrid examples of abuse and bad situations kids were in, that I really didn't need to read. I know bad things happen to kids....I am trying to make sure that doesn't happen to my kids but it doesn't mean I need to read a ton of awful in depth stories about bad things that happen to kids! Way to make me worry more than I already do!

Now there were some things I pulled from this book and worry is one of those things....the best antidote to worry is action. If you can do something to lessen your worry in a situation, do it. Here are the other things I got from the book:

- \*Instinct is your best tool
- \*I learned the ways to spot denial
- \*I learned survival signals (or how to spot creepy predators by what they do or say)
- \*If you're ever lost, go to a woman (no longer say Don't Talk To Strangers)
- \*The mother's brigade! Brilliant!
- \*Safe sitter hotline to find a babysitting course near you
- \*Don't get an older male babysitter....the section about babysitters, most examples of situations gone wrong were from male babysitters!!! I know that's generalizing but those were his examples in the book.

Bottom line, this book had a few pointers but mostly scary tales of woe....I was hoping it would be the other way around.

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## Deanna says

4.5 Stars

My sister in law bought me this as a Christmas gift when I was pregnant with my daughter. I will admit that at the time I was a bit surprised by the gift as I was very pregnant and SUPER emotional. However, when I

did read it I appreciated the fact that she bought it for me.

I found it very interesting and I learned a great deal.

Some of the main issues:

Safety skills for children outside the home

Warning signs of sexual abuse

How to screen baby-sitters and choose schools

Strategies for keeping teenagers safe from violence

Sounds scary doesn't it? But I found that being educated, prepared and taking precautions is a lot better than spending time worrying myself sick. Although, let's be honest as parents we will ALWAYS worry!!

However, by preparing myself and my child (as she got older), I could worry less.

I'm not saying it's easy to read a book like this. Scary stuff to think about and talk about. But I know some of it has helped over the years. I'm sure some strategies may have changed now (since things like social media have become huge parts of our lives) but the majority is likely the same. Actually at the time it was so helpful and reassuring. It reassured me that I was more prepared for things that could come up. For example, what to ask when interviewing potential babysitters. Although I was lucky and had my mother and didn't have to rely on very much outside help.

One thing that has stuck with me all these years after reading it is...

**FOLLOW YOUR INTUITION** and teach your children to follow their intuition as well.

Does that man (or woman) that lives down the hall give you the creeps? Do you feel awkward leaving your children with certain people? Do you feel uncomfortable with a certain daycare worker? I'm not saying to run around accusing everyone of being a predator but we have that inner feeling that most of the time warns us for a reason.

He mentions in the book that we are so often more concerned with people we read about in the newspaper or see on the news, kidnappers, murderers, etc...that live **ACROSS** the world from us. But then we often ignore that feeling that we get when we come into contact with someone we see often. Not that we shouldn't be cautious in all situations but if a feeling is sticking with us it's good to trust it. I did become worried that I wasn't sure how to trust my "gut" and thought what if it's there all the time and I can't trust anyone? But I did find that I was able to tell the difference if something really stuck with me.

It gives information and tips on how we can teach our children about touch, the body, personal boundaries, communication, assertiveness and more.

When my daughter was around seven she had a certain friend who's father gave me an odd feeling. I met him once or twice and I just couldn't put my finger on what was bothering me about him. At first I thought I was just being paranoid but after my daughter came home from a play-date (they had gone to dinner and a movie) she mentioned that the dad was asking questions that made her feel uncomfortable. She mentioned that he kept joking about the girls having boyfriends and did they want to kiss a boy. She felt really awkward about the kissing talk. Now maybe this was entirely innocent but it bothered me and so after that I would still have the friend over to our house but my daughter didn't go over there. Eventually the friendship ran its course. Nothing else happened but I didn't allow very much contact or sleepovers etc. I also asked my daughter to tell me if a friend ever shared anything that concerned her.

When I was young my mom rarely let me sleep ANYWHERE....I was so upset with her. I wanted so badly to sleep at different friends houses over the years and most of the time she would say no. She would only let me

sleep over at people's houses where she knew the parents well and had a good feeling about them. At the time I didn't understand. Now as a mother I COMPLETELY get it. I am the same way with my daughter. I know there are some people who think I'm overprotective but I don't let it bother me. MY daughter still has sleepovers with close friends and cousins and doesn't seem to feel left out but I was and still am very cautious when I don't know someone. As she gets older she will start to make her own decisions and I hope I've taught her what she needs to know about keeping herself safe.

The book talks about so many different issues and what can happen at different ages and how to be prepared for them. When my daughter was young it was hard having those conversations but they were so necessary. I didn't want to terrify her but she did need to be aware of her feelings, her surroundings, and what to do if something did happen. I wanted her to know that no matter what has happened that she can always come to me.

We try to teach our kids to be polite. We want our children to behave well respect others. However, we also need to make sure that they also know they don't have to obey all adults in all situations. Especially if they feel they are in danger. For example if someone is trying to persuade them to go with them that it's okay to yell "NO" if that doesn't work and someone is forcefully trying to take them then all bets are off, it's okay to yell, scream, kick, and fight etc.

The books mentions THE TEST OF TWELVE:

1. How to honor their feelings--if someone makes them uncomfortable, that's an important signal
2. You the parents) are strong enough to hear about any experience they've had, no matter how unpleasant
3. It's OK to rebuff and defy adults
4. It's okay to be assertive
5. How to ask for assistance or help
6. How to choose WHO to ask
7. How to describe their peril
8. It's OK to strike, even to injure, someone if they believe they are in danger, and that you'll support any action they take as a result of feeling uncomfortable or afraid
9. It's OK to make noise, to scream, to yell, to run
10. If someone ever tries to force them to go somewhere, what they scream should include, "This is not my dad" (because onlookers assume the adult is a parent)
11. If someone says, "Don't yell", the think to do IS yell, and if someone says "Don't tell" the thing to do IS tell;
12. To fully resist ever going anywhere out of public view with someone they don't know, and particularly to resist going anywhere with someone who tries to persuade them.

Of course all of the things on this list would need to be discussed further with your child. There would also likely be different answers or actions they would take depending on their age. But it's a good start. It opens up a dialogue between you and your child.

I could really go on but I'm pretty sure this review is already way too long. Some of what is talked about in the book is common sense but there is also a lot of good tips and information. I may not have agreed with everything that was said in the book but, it gave me a lot to think about It helped me realize just how important it is to trust myself and my intuition.

In my opinion this was an excellent and very important book, that I highly recommend.

## shanamadele says

Easy-to-read book on hard-to-face subject. I appreciate that the author takes care to emphasize where victims/survivors took action, even while pointing out how they might have escaped injury/victimization by acting differently earlier in the encounter. I also like the concern he shows for teaching violence prevention as a way of helping people be less anxious and more open generally.

He talks about some of the myriad reasons we--the big society We--tolerate violence and fail to see it. He does not address issues such as how racism and classism affect our intuitions. On the other hand, he uses both statistics and stories to underscore his thesis that much of what we think we know about who is violent and how we can avoid violence is wrong.

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## Tanya W says

This seems like a must read for parents of both boys and girls... has practical tips for keeping children/youth safe (from sexual abuse, injury or death from guns, stranger kidnapping, and more). I wish I could find the book to note some other specifics for future reference... so more to come later...

A few I can think of now:

- 1) Don't emphasize not talking to strangers as much as teaching children who they should talk to if they need help (a woman, not a man).
  - 2) Teach them what to say and do if someone tries to molest or abuse them... "Don't do that or I will tell." Also advises that if anyone ever tells them not to tell... then tell. If anyone tells them not to scream... scream.
  - 3) Listen to intuition and don't worry about hurting someone's feelings when it comes to children and their safety.
  - 4) Teach your children about the 2 factors that make sexual assault or abuse easy to carry out: privacy and control (PC).
  - 5) I liked the discussion about worrying as well... it made me feel that I have less reason to worry if I proactively carry out steps to help my children be safe.
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## Maren says

a must read for every woman and every parent. some of the stuff he says is obvious and intuitive, and yet we need to hear it again because we tend to get comfortable with the inherent danger in all situations. i especially like how he constantly asserts that we have the inherent intuition (i like to call it the Holy Spirit) to read the subtle clues around us and be alert to potential danger situations. it's true that people, especially women, are abducted and molested in broad daylight, by family & friends, and that you can't take enough precautions. it's also true that you don't need to live your life so overcome by worry that you can't be alert to the "gift of fear" that helps us to sense when a dangerous situation presents itself as well as how to react...

i really like the stories he uses to illustrate his points. they don't seem voyeuristic or gratuitous, even those from personal experience, but certainly prove his point to the max. like i said, everyone that is a woman, a

parent, a concerned citizen (in short everyone) should read this book.

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## Stephanie says

De Becker writes that fear is a gift: it's that intuitive voice--gut feeling, hunch--that helps us recognize a potential threat and stay safe. As with most things in life, you want a balance: too little fear, and we miss out on warning signals that can keep us safe; too much fear, and we'll never know what is really a threat and what isn't.

De Becker's book achieves this balance masterfully. He doesn't shy away from painful and fear-inducing topics, but they are tempered with real world statistics that shed light on when our fears have a basis in fact, and when they don't. (Kidnapping by a stranger, for example, isn't nearly the threat you may think it is based on what you see in the media.) He helps us look at the hard truths, and then gives us expert guidance on dealing with those realities. The advice given here is practical and easy to implement, whether you're looking for a baby sitter, wondering if those security guards at your kid's school really make your kid safer, or don't know how to really determine if your child is ready to be left home alone. This book can also help you begin an age-appropriate dialogue with your child, a dialogue that can and should mature as your child does.

I'm writing this review as I'm finishing this book for the second time. A few years have passed since my first read, and as my daughter has gotten older, I'm taking away different things from this book. I'm less interested in choosing a babysitter, for example, and more interested in preparing my daughter to be out in the world on her own. Whatever age your child is, from toddler to young adult, there is information here that will benefit you and your family.

I think this book should be required reading for all parents and grandparents, and that it should be re-read on a regular basis. The information in this book is that important.

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## Sheena says

As a future teacher, I tend to pick up the occasional book about parenting (since it's useful to understand a few different perspectives about kids).

This is one of the better childcare/parenting/teaching related books I've read. Instead of focusing on all of the bad things that COULD happen to a child who isn't constantly supervised, de Becker recommends a simple idea: teach children how to take care of themselves.

One of de Becker's focal points is trusting intuition, or that feeling that something isn't right. If children know to trust their intuition, and how to convey that feeling to an adult, they might be less likely to do what they're told because "a grown-up said to" -- which makes them less vulnerable and safer.

Another key point de Becker makes is teaching children how to identify helpful or safe strangers. Every child will, at some point, either be in a public place alone or will need to ask for help. They might be fairly young or they might be teenagers. If a child is told that all strangers everywhere are bad and scary, they might not ask for help -- even from someone who is there TO help, like a police officer or security guard.

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