

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

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"I commit that by the end of this book, you'll know more and be uncertain less; see more and deny less, accept more and hesitate less; act more and worry less. How can I be so sure? Because if nature selected you for the job of protecting a child, odds are you're up to it."--Gavin de Becker

In his groundbreaking bestseller *The Gift of Fear*, Gavin de Becker showed millions of readers that like every creature on earth, human beings can predict violent behavior. Now, in *Protecting the Gift*, de Becker empowers parents to trust fully their own intuition when it comes to their children's safety.

In this indispensable resource, de Becker provides keen insights into the behavior and strategies of predators. He offers practical new steps to enhance children's safety at every age level: specific questions parents can ask to screen effectively and evaluate baby-sitters, day-care services, schools, and doctors; a "Test of Twelve" safety skills children need before being alone in public; warning signs to help parents protect children from sexual abuse; and how to keep teenage girls and boys from unsafe situations with peers and adults. De Becker also shatters the myth that rules like *Never Talk to Strangers* will keep your children safe. By showing what danger really looks like--as opposed to what we might imagine it looks like--de Becker gives parents freedom from many common worries and unwarranted fears.

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. De Becker 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?

What should I ask child-care professionals when I interview them?

What's the best way to prepare my child for walking to school alone?

How can my child be safer at school?

How can I spot sexual predators?

What should I do if my child is lost in public?

How can I teach my child about risk without causing too much fear?

What must my teenage daughter know in order to be safe?

What must my teenage son know in order to be safe?

And finally, in the face of all these questions, how can I reduce the worrying?

A generation ago, in *Baby and Child Care*, Dr. Benjamin Spock told parents that they already possessed most of the important knowledge about their children's health. Similarly, when it comes to predicting violence and protecting children, de Becker demonstrates that you already know most of what you need to know--parents have, he says, "the wisdom of the species."

Be warned: In many ways this is a terrifying book. It deals with a subject--violence against children--that most of us never want to consider. But, as Gavin de Becker stresses, such situations, though rare, can occur, so all parents must deal with the facts in order to protect their children properly. De Becker's aim is to create awareness of potential dangers and provide parents with the knowledge necessary for prevention and control. As he

emphatically states in *Protecting the Gift*, much of this knowledge is already hard-wired in the form of intuition: "This natural ability is deep, brilliant, powerful. Nature's greatest accomplishment, the human brain, is stunningly efficient when its host is at risk, but when one's child is at risk, it moves to a whole new level, one we can justifiably call miraculous." The trick, he stresses, is trusting and acting on intuition.

In this valuable, even necessary, book, he shatters many myths about the typical profiles of regular offenders and the prevalence of such problems as sexual abuse and kidnapping. He also deconstructs the wisdom of traditional maxims such as "Never talk to strangers" and "If you are ever lost, go to a policeman." Without offering a compendium of every conceivable danger, he identifies warning signals and real risks that are often easy to spot once you know what to look for. He offers practical advice on recognizing signs of sexual abuse, choosing a baby sitter or nanny, how to prepare kids for walking to school alone, and how to teach children about potential risks without making them afraid to venture out of the house. And he continually stresses that denial and ignoring intuition are the biggest mistakes that parents make in protecting their kids from those that mean them harm. Well written and infinitely informative, *Protecting the Gift* affords parents more confidence and less reason for unnecessary worry. --Shawn Carkonen

"Gavin de Becker has done it again--this time for kids. *Protecting the Gift* provides practical solutions to keeping youngsters safe from the day-to-day violence that threatens their world. De Becker is truly a modern-day knight --a good guy who shares his intuitive and intellectual armor with us all. A brilliant lesson plan in prevention." --Ken Wooden, leading child advocate and author of *Child Lures*

#### Other Books

*Engaging Boys and Men in Sexual Assault Prevention*, *Engaging Boys and Men in Sexual Assault Prevention: Theory, Research and Practice* explores sexual assault prevention programs for boys and men. Following an ecosystemic perspective, the book examines individual risk and protective factors, discusses initiatives to prevent sexual aggression (i.e., bystander intervention programs, given their use among men), covers programs that specifically seek to engage boys and men in sexual assault prevention, presents key risk and protective factors for sexual aggression (i.e., healthy masculinity, rape myth acceptance), and describes the need and rationale for sexual assault prevention efforts. Addresses current challenges and controversies in the field of sexual assault prevention Explores existing individual-level workshops and media-based interventions that address men's violence against women Reviews the association between traditional masculine norms and sexual violence perpetration Discusses international sexual assault prevention programs that engage boys and men Highlight how aspects of hypermasculinity strongly correlate with sexual aggression Provides an overview of research that examines risk factors for sexual aggression Synthesizes the conceptualization of rape myths, current assessments of rape myths, and examines how rape myths function as a risk factor for perpetration

Protecting the gift : Keeping children and teenagers safe (and parents sane ). New York, NY: Dial Press. De Zutter, A., Horselenberg, R., & van Koppen, P. J. (2017). The prevalence of false allegations of rape in the United States from ..."