



1218 E CALHOUN ST  
WOODSTOCK, IL

A Pro-Star MMA School

1-815-334-WMMA

## SELF-DEFENSE FOR CHILDREN

by Kurt Schulenburg

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Welcome to the **Woodstock Mixed Martial Arts** "Self-Defense for Children" Primer. As Mixed Martial Arts Instructors and as parents, we have compiled these self-defense tips over many years with the goal of increasing parental awareness of the dangers facing young children - and offering some solutions that may work in your situation.

Our lawyers insist that we add that there can be no guarantees that any advice given here will provide safety for your children or yourself. There are simply too many variables, too many unusual situations that can occur to pretend that reading any advice from any source can guarantee safety. What we suggest is that you learn as much as possible about safety, about your neighborhood, about your home and about your children and then use common sense in conjunction with this knowledge.

### WAKE-UP!

The most important first step in safety is to Wake-Up. Too many of us drone through life, focusing our attention on our cell phones, our shopping lists, our media players -and even our kids! - and miss the many cues in our environment that are often shouting for us to duck and cover! Let's be clear about this: bad guys look for victims that are distracted, who aren't paying attention. People who are not focused on where they are and what they are doing are the easiest marks for these criminals - and everybody likes it when their job is a little easier.

Look around you. Always! Keep alert to what is happening around you. Pretend that all of life is a busy street that must be crossed and always look both ways!

Teach your children to pay attention to their surroundings. Whether it's in a store or restaurant or simply walking to the car, there is a fun game that really helps both you and them to look around. This is a "What if" game, one that you can modify to your heart's content as the "rules" are not as important as the results.

Basically, ask your child a "What if" question dealing with safety and the environment you're in. On the sidewalk, ask "What would happen if a bike came charging toward you? What would you do? Would you jump to the side? Hide behind this bench?" In a



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restaurant, ask "What if the waiter tripped and a whole platter of cream pies came flying at you - what would you do?"

It doesn't matter what they answer. "Get hit with a bunch of pies" is as good an answer as "Duck!" The point is to make your children aware of what's going on around them. After they answer, it's their turn to make up a scenario and your turn to respond. Feel free to be silly - a giant gorilla swooping down from an airplane can be a lot of fun. It doesn't matter if the scenarios are real or even possible! I actually tend to stay away from real possibilities, particularly with younger children as the goal is to become aware of their surroundings - not truly be worried that a thug is going to jump out of the alley!

Keep them looking around for places that gorillas could hide. Keep them looking around.

Travel through life awake and aware - it's a lot more fun and a lot safer!

### **THE BEST BLOCK...**

If you've attended our Dragons or Tigers classes you probably know this one. After teaching some of our Ten Blocks to children, we ask what's the Best Block to keep them out of danger? Many respond with "Rhino Block" or "Windshield Wipers" (two of our Ten!). I like to hear a lot of their answers before I tell them that it was a trick question because the Best Block is really a City Block. That invariably gets confused looks because I haven't taught them anything called a City Block. What I'm talking about is a *real* City Block - from that street to that street. Put one of those between you and danger and your safety goes up exponentially!

Another Game we play in class is an observation tester. I have the children look out our windows for a few moments, telling them to try and remember what they are seeing. We then look away and I ask questions. "Was there a red car parked on the street? How about a blue one? Was there anyone sitting in the car? Were there any people walking on the streets or sidewalks? What were they doing?"

The questions are deliberately about areas of potential danger that children should be aware of. If we see a group of people that just might be dangerous right ahead of us on the sidewalk, what should we do? Crossing the street or walking around the block are solutions that just might keep us safer. Putting a City Block between us and potential danger is often a good idea. Bad Guys can't hit or kick us from that far away, they probably can't catch us if we have that much of a lead and even if they throw or shoot



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something, we've got a much better chance of them missing than if we walk right up to them.

## **MOMS ARE THE BEST**

We try to give our younger students the simplest answers to safety questions that we can. If they get lost in a store, it's obviously okay for them to talk to a stranger to get help. But which stranger? I shouldn't have to mention that we shouldn't even bring our children into places that have Bad Guys frequenting the aisles - but one never really knows.

Store managers are good, police officers are good, most people are good. But, to children, figuring out if that REALLY is a police uniform or trying to figure out what a store manager is supposed to look like can be confusing. There is one class of strangers, however, that is both easy to identify and, statistically, the safest demographic of all: moms. Women with children. Tell your lost kids to seek out a mom. Moms ALWAYS help lost kids. And they're easy to identify: they've got kids hanging on them!

Obviously, we can't pretend that no moms have ever committed crimes or joined the Bad Guy fraternity, but the odds are pretty good that a mom is both willing and knowledgeable when it comes to helping lost children. I don't want to slight dads but moms have an edge when it comes to the odds. And we all know the old adage about there never being a Police Officer around when you need one. There are moms everywhere, moms that can help. Searching for a police officer has taken too many youngsters too far away from where mom disappeared.

If you're lost... ask a mom for help. Moms are the best.

## **SPECIFICS**

When it comes to physical skills that can help children stay out of danger, any school that tells you that their "awesome front kick" or "incredible spin back fist" is the secret to keeping your child safe is, quite simply, lying to you. Sure, putting up a fight is important - no one should peacefully accompany a deadly stranger - but to think that "my kid knows how to defend himself, he knows karate" can create very dangerous situations for children. A 50 pound kid is no match for a 140 pound adult. "Karate" is not magic. Strength and weight are vitally important in any fight - that's why they have weight divisions in boxing and MMA. Skill can always tip the balance in a fair fight, but



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professional criminals know the odds, know how to size up their victims. They are NOT going to choose a fair fight. They will simply wait for the next easier victim.

Our students do learn some physical strategies for self-defense - screaming is very important, holding on to an attacker's leg can slow his progress and make it difficult to carry the child away, hiding under a parked car can be good because it's next to impossible for an adult to get you out. These are all usable strategies that our students are made aware of.

And, yes, we're all about "awesome front kicks" as well - we just don't over-promise. In a fair fight, our kids can hold their own with anyone.

And, as parents, it's up to us to keep them aware of their surroundings, to teach them how to avoid potential dangers, to walk away from trouble. With any luck, this will keep them out of the unfair fights.

Safety is everybody's business. Don't ever be afraid to be too concerned, to be branded as overly cautious. Life IS an inherently dangerous venture - there's only one way out - but being aware of what we're doing, being flexible enough to choose a safe path and learning how to create safe choices are vitally important in creating a secure and happy adventure for both us and our children.

*For more information contact Carolyn and Kurt Schulenburg at the Schulenburg Family Woodstock Mixed Martial Arts school. Call us at 815-334-WMMA (9662). Visit us on the web at [www.WoodstockMMA.com](http://www.WoodstockMMA.com) or feel free to send us some email at [karate@woodstockmartialarts.com](mailto:karate@woodstockmartialarts.com)*