



7 Things Your Daughter Must Know...

About Personal Safety BEFORE She Goes Away to College

When it comes to talking to your daughter about her personal safety, sharing accurate, up to date information and good strategies is key. Here are 7 important ideas you'll want to discuss with her...



Danger Exists

Dangerous situations aren't lurking around every corner. But they do exist. And your daughter must understand that she is not immune to them.

From large, prestigious universities to small community colleges, recent statistics show that one in five women will experience some form of sexual assault while at college. And while the problem stretches across the board from first-year newcomers to seasoned postgrad students, **it is freshmen girls who are most at risk.**

The topic is unpleasant, I know, but its important to talk to your daughter about this. Help her understand that the goal isn't to frighten her, but rather sharpen her awareness and strengthen her commitment to be cautious.

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Strangers Are the Least of Your Worries

When talking to your daughter about her personal safety, you probably won't have to warn her about steering clear of creepy strangers. What you should mention, however, is the fact that **college women are significantly more likely to be attacked by someone they know** — acquaintances, classmates, and even guys they date. Studies show that 80% of all sexual assaults on campus are committed by NON-strangers.

Remind your daughter that campus predators use familiarity as a tactic to make young women vulnerable. Help her see that while she should be open and receptive to new people and relationships, she must be careful and not let her guard down too soon.

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Trust Your Instincts

Animals never doubt their instincts. Humans, on the other hand, dismiss them all the time.

When it comes to your daughter's safety, **one of the most dangerous things she can do** is ignore the inner signals that tell her something's not quite right about a situation or person.

When you talk to your daughter about managing her safety, encourage her to trust these feelings and **never second guess herself**. If the hair on the back of her neck stands up or she has a churning feeling in her gut, it's for a reason. These are internal survival signals designed to activate her awareness and warn her of potential danger.

Impress upon her the importance of staying in touch with these feelings and to never disregard or deny them. Learning to heed these warnings is an essential safety habit that will serve her now, through her college years and for the rest of her life.



Drinking Isn't the Problem

Alcohol plays a role in nearly every young person's college experience. But the drinking itself isn't inherently a problem. It's the absence of guidelines and the unwise decisions that follow which can lead to unsafe outcomes.

If your daughter decides to drink while at college, here are some basic guidelines to share with her:

- Let her know that having a bite to eat before she goes out will help absorb alcohol and slow its affect.
- Drinking a glass of water between each alcoholic drink is another technique that will help her avoid overdoing it.
- Warn her that drinking from a party punch bowl is asking for trouble. Alcohol content is typically triple potency... or more.
- Encourage her to avoid or at least limit participation in drinking games.

Following these guidelines will allow her to take part and have fun while staying safe and in control.



Privacy is the enemy of safety

In nearly every case, sexual assault takes place behind closed doors. If your daughter feels unsure about a particular person or situation, make sure she knows that by avoiding isolation and **staying in public view, she reduces her chances of getting into a bad situation by more than 90%.**

Avoiding being in a private place with someone she doesn't know well is one of the most important things she can do to stay safe.

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Unwanted Pursuit Can Lead to Big Trouble

While we've all seen plenty of "guy won't give up on girl" storylines with fairytale endings in movies and books, the reality is that most over-persistent admirers tend to make life uncomfortable for young women who don't quite know where or how to draw the line.

And though in almost all cases, overzealous suitors eventually get the message and move on—there are the rare few instances where **unchecked perseverance can lead to obsession, stalking, sexual assault or worse.**

Putting a stop to ongoing unwanted attention is — like many things — simple, but not easy. It requires that your daughter be skillful in her ability to set clear, unmistakable boundaries.

Teach her the importance of being able to say "no" in a way that will be instantly understood and believed. Teach her to be direct when she has to be. And teach her to stand her ground any time someone challenges her boundaries or tests her resolve.

Help her understand that the ability to communicate powerfully and express herself assertively is her first line of defense against men who don't want to take "no" for an answer.



No One is Coming to the Rescue

The theme of the maiden in distress and hero who comes to her rescue is universal. We find it revealed in classical literature, fairy tales and mythology from all over the world. Unfortunately, in real life, it just doesn't hold up.

The truth is, for your daughter to stay safe she must recognize that in far more cases than not, **her safety will lie in her own hands.**

Beyond having her learn the essentials of awareness and prevention, hands-on self-defense training should also be included in your daughters college prep.

She doesn't have to become a kung fu master or black belt in karate, but having a few simple techniques that she can rely on can make a real difference if she ever finds herself in a dangerous situation.

Help her find a first-rate trainer to teach her the basics. With quality instruction that focuses specifically on women's safety issues, it will only take a few sessions for her to learn what she needs to know.

In the end, she'll feel safer and more confident. And you'll feel better, too.

College is a time of adventure, discovery and wonder. **Arming your daughter with these basic awarenesses will build her confidence and strengthen her commitment to stay alert and make smart decisions about her safety.**

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Brad Michaels

Brad@BradMichaelsTraining.com

www.BradMichaelsTraining.com

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