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Staying Safe With CrossFit Kids

Do your kids know how to escape from an attacker?

Mikki Lee Martin and Dan Strametz explain how to defend against wrist grabs.

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All photos: Danell Marks/CrossFit Kids

CrossFit Brand X began as Brand X Martial Arts in 1999. Things have changed a great deal since then, but our roots still firmly grip the concept of self-protection and of teaching children that it is OK to fight back—and how to do so.

One of the most common attacks on children by bullies and adults with bad intent—and according to statistics, 75 percent of stranger child abductors are male (1)—is the wrist grab. In our CrossFit Kids classes, we use focus work to learn techniques to defend against wrist grabs, and we use the the game portion of the class—about 10 minutes—to practice the following:

- Identifying the danger (the grab).
- Defending against the attack.
- Escaping to safety (emphasis on the direction to run and to whom).

Depending on the ages of the kids and the size of the class, these elements can be introduced together or one at a time. For example, we spend a few weeks doing the focus work of identifying what it looks like when someone is trying to grab your wrist, then teaching how to respond to each of the main types of grabs (straight-across, cross-hand).

We do this by having the kids walk around a given area. Trainers are also walking around and attempt to grab kids by the wrist. The kids identify the attempted grab and run in a direction opposite the attacker's movement. If the grab is successful, they apply the appropriate technique described below and immediately upon release run in a direction opposite the attacker's movement. They are instructed to run toward a woman or a "mommy."

Straight-Across Wrist Grab

Children bend their arm and move their elbow forward until it touches their attacker's forearm. At the same, they time snap their wrist out. Children might have to step forward while doing this.

Cross-Hand Wrist Grab

Children take the hand that is grabbed, give a thumbs up (a "hitchhiker") and pull away aggressively, then run to the nearest parent, preferably a mother. The technical detail is that the child's thumb should find the opening between the attacker's thumb and finger.

We recommend that children be encouraged to yell and kick simultaneously while hitching out of the grab.



With a straight-across wrist grab, children are instructed to bend the elbow toward the attacker's forearm, then wrench the wrist free.

References

1. Finkelhor D, Hammer H, and Sedlak AJ. Nonfamily abducted children: National estimates and characteristics. October 2002. Available at http://www.missingkids.com/en_US/documents/nismart2_nonfamily.pdf. Accessed Dec. 13, 2011.