

# PARENTS WITH PREPAREDNESS

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**PARENTS AND SCHOOLS CAN  
COMPLETE THE ONE-TWO  
PUNCH FOR SCHOOL SAFETY**

**KATHERINE SCHWEIT**

**NABEELA  
BARBARI**

**FROM THE WALLS OF  
YOUR SCHOOL TO THE  
HALLS OF CAPITOL HILL**

**GUIDING YOUR TEEN FOR  
SUCCESS: TOP COMMUNICATION  
SKILLS FOR JOB SEEKERS**

**MELANIE  
UPRIGHT**

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# Welcome to *Parents with Preparedness Magazine*



have become almost commonplace. We take a holistic, whole of community approach to preparedness discussions, which is essential to address this contagion of targeted violence and other threats to safety.

We are so fortunate to be able to field the best authors from both the public and private sectors with a rich diversity of experience, and one common mission -that is to make the world a safer place for our children and theirs. My thanks to each of these authors for their relentless work, our loyal sponsors for their essential contributions in support of our cause, and my team, my lifelong gratitude.

**Kathleen Kiernan, EdD**

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Welcome to the 9th edition of Parents with Preparedness magazine, in celebration of National Preparedness Month 2023. As we say goodbye to summer and hello to a new school year, we also reflect on the 22nd anniversary of 9/11 and how it changed our nation forever. This year has also seen a surge of violence that has affected many families across generations, altering how we learn, teach, socialize, and travel.

On top of that, we have faced natural disasters such as the catastrophic fire in Hawaii and the hurricanes and floods that have destroyed so many homes, schools, and familiar surroundings within these communities. In all cases, these events are hard to comprehend and even harder to explain to our children, who despite our best efforts can no longer be shielded from bad news when it is literally available 24 hours a day. Talking to them about these issues can help them cope with fear, strengthen resilience, and develop a preparedness mindset.

That's why, PWPORG gathered a wonderful group of educators and practitioners to share their earned experience, insights, and advice on how to deal with and explain these unprecedented events that at one time seemed unimaginable, and now



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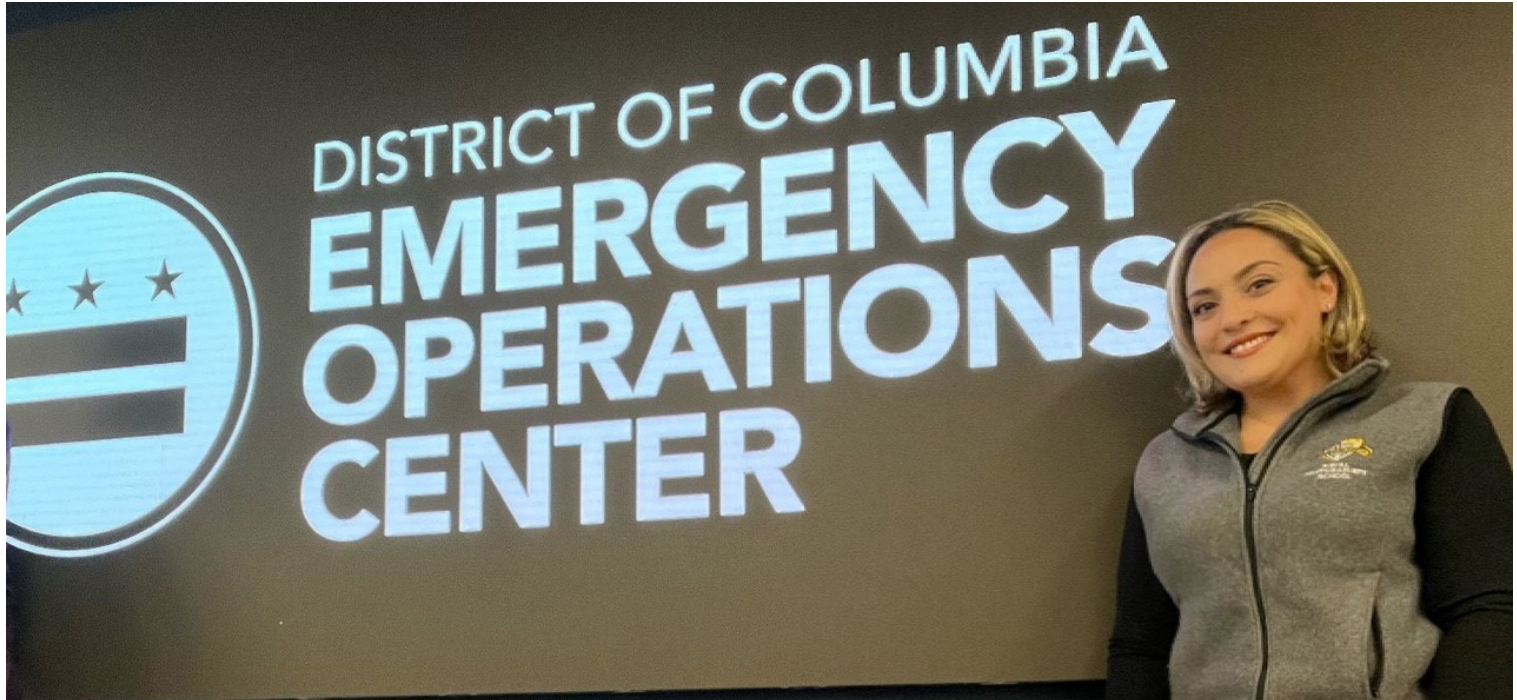
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# From The Walls Of Your School To The Halls Of Capital Hill

By Nabeela N. Barbari



**T**he very act of prevention is by and large less sensational than response. The examples are endless. Staying out of the sun to prevent skin cancer, flossing to prevent cavities, replacing your roof before it leaks. Yet, sending water bottles and generators to a community recovering from a devastating hurricane remains the normalized approach to saving lives after a natural disaster. As the most effective lifesaving approach, we have yet to normalize investing in more risk-resilient infrastructure during the rebuilding phase, or applying equitable recovery principles into federal processes such that resources are more justly dispersed across all communities and populations.

One of the most horrific, yet most frequent examples, of prevention being less sensational than response is in the space of targeted violence. For a myriad of reasons that undoubtedly warrant greater discussion, seeing a SWAT unit swarm to take out an active shooter is simply more captivating than establishing a social service and public health care network around families and communities. The goal should be preventing someone from becoming violent before they start. Our society has normalized tactical responses as the most effective response to stop an active shooting in progress...yet it does nothing to prevent it.

Stop me if you've heard this before, but 9/11 was a pivotal moment in my life, and led me to pursue a career in national security. Many of my cohorts were galvanized by the same events. While less civic-minded people turned to an unconscionable level of nationalism, the attacks bolstered my patriotism. I felt compelled to engage, and this passion has propelled me along very unexpected paths in my career. Prior to joining OTHSolutions, a national security consulting firm based in the Washington, DC area, I've spent the majority of my career at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and White House

National Security Council. While I've worked on the most diverse groupings of security programs imaginable, there was always an underlying theme: Prevention is truly the best form of protection.

Today more than ever, I'm reminded of how our nation has yet to meaningfully embrace and normalize prevention as the best form of protection. Although I am not a mother, I am a "bonus mom", a Godmother, and an "Auntie" to 10 beautiful humans. I am also a daughter, sister, friend, and neighbor – which are enough in and of themselves to care the extent that I do about targeted violence prevention. As back-to-school activities commence for the 2023-2024 school year, I find myself triggered. One needn't scroll too far in their news feed to see evidence of the need for stronger social services and public health care networks for K-12 families and communities.

I look at K-12 school safety through the same lens from which I look at many other security risks. Elementary schools, once a hub for local communities, now lock their doors at all times. Locker time has been replaced with lockdown drills, and new weapon detection and alerting systems continue to receive more funding than the programs needed to create supportive school cultures and ensure the availability of other prevention-oriented services. While these precautions are a reflection of our current reality, they do nothing to change reality itself. A locked door will not fix the broken person who feels compelled to commit an act of violence. As a society, we will never be able to arrest and prosecute our way to safety.

While prevention is unequivocally the best solution, it's also the most complicated. Not only because of the general lackluster nature and lack of funding discussed earlier, as those are merely symptoms of the problem. The problem is that our nation's decision-makers have yet to embrace, normalize, and invest in prevention as the best form of protection. While there is certainly a





need to empirically understand this problem much further, that is neither an easy nor quick discussion.

My goal here is to simply share a few thoughts on a topic that we all care for deeply. If, like me, you find yourself triggered by back-to-school festivities, you are not alone. All we can do is share ideas and a commitment to keeping our children and the K-12 academic community safe as best we can. I offer three quick considerations from a national security practitioner and ally – in hopes of inspiring local action and cascading national culture change from the walls of your school to the halls of Capitol Hill.

*First – Follow the Money:* We must unite to shape, amplify, and improve the federally funded products and services currently available to all communities. Every April 15, we pay for tools, grants, information products, and other capabilities designed to help K-12 academic communities advance their safety awareness and security programming. Let's join forces and become even more responsible consumers of these goods. Not only will we foster more equitable distribution of capabilities across all communities, it provides justification for greater resourcing in the future and ensures the ongoing design and development of these capabilities are done with your direct feedback. In the universe of uniting to build whole-of-society solutions to some of our greatest national security challenges, K-12 safety and resilience is the first among equals. Leveraging, informing, and expanding upon products and services already available is something we all can do immediately. From grant funding (beyond buying more locks and security systems) to safety and security best practices (on topics including cybersecurity, infectious diseases, and emergency planning), [SchoolSafety.gov](https://www.schoolsafety.gov) is an extensive collaboration between federal government Departments and Agencies providing K-12 communities actionable recommendations, resources, and opportunities. Their goal is to create safe and supportive learning environments for students and educators, and a one-stop-shop for easy access. Direct engagement and feedback can only make this a more useful and productive program. Perhaps your local school district has a parent/teacher organization or association with a safety committee who may find this information useful. If one doesn't exist, perhaps this is an opportunity to mobilize. Check it out!

*Second – Representation in Security:* We must adopt a larger world view that opens our aperture to more than our experiences and academic training enabled. This happens when we hire experts with diversity in background, age, physical abilities, gender, cultural experience, and real-world training. Not doing so for the purposes of checking the proverbial diversity box, but to genuinely establish a shared understanding. We need to fully realize the value of expanding our apertures and evolving our previously accepted norms and barriers to entering the education system. We have to create, incentivize, and foster a workforce pipeline of education professionals and staff to sustain the demands of our country. This can't happen if we continue on a path of divisiveness, and expect teachers, school resource officers, counselors, and administrative staff to do more with less. How does your school, district, or county recruit, retain, and ensure continuous vetting and training of teachers and staff? There is no shortage of empirical data you can find with a simple Google search on why and how increasing diversity in the K-12 academic pipeline is beneficial. It not only makes schools stronger but



increases school climate health which leads to preventing targeted violence.

*Third – Get Smart on Cyber:* Whether understanding child exploitation risks on social media, or the complex dependencies on cyber systems in your district, there are many ways this over-simplified statement can become noise vs useful tips. As I am sure many of you do, I spend a significant amount of time on Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube trying to stay current on the latest trends that the 10-19-year-olds in my life are most susceptible to. There are also a number of free resources online discussing cybersecurity best practices and safety tips to help keep kids connected while safe. With persistent exposure to sensationalized “casual” violence on social media and in Hollywood, real-life violence, lock down drills, and violence in gaming, one can easily surmise our society is becoming apathetic and desensitized toward violent behavior. Communities differ on how K-12 teachers, administrators, and staff understand the use of social media as it impacts student health. Some behavior is mere affectation, while more malevolent tendencies may belong to students who fly well below the radar. This, in addition to increased virtual environments from hybrid and asynchronous learning, creates an even larger smokescreen for K-12 staff to detect and address anomalous behavior. In the world of prevention, identifying changes in activity and behavior is key to saving lives.

In my lifetime, I never imagined students having to practice active shooter drills. School was my safety net and one of my favorite places to be. I can still name almost every one of my K-12 teachers and remain in touch with a small handful who left lasting impressions... and never miss an opportunity to give a shout out to Mr. Allen and Mr. Tomlinson! K-12 is at the crux of our social construct. Can I imagine a world where the U.S. isn't a bastion of mass shootings? It's difficult to remember who we were before Columbine and 9/11. But I know we are stronger than we project today, and that the status quo is unacceptable. This constant swatting in the air is not preventing the already-laid







eggs from hatching. While not a swift fix, prevention holds tenets accessible to all in some way, and are the most effective in achieving the zero causality results only desired by protection. The security cycle has become a maxim in my profession: Prevent, Prepare, Respond, Recovery. My career has touched every phase of this cycle, with prevention my increasing focus. And for people such as myself who are deeply invested in public safety, my belief in the real power of collective action to change our current culture around prevention. This offers a sense of hope. 🍀

## About The Author

*Nabeela Barbari* is the Executive Vice President of OTHSolutions, Inc., a national security consulting firm where she leads strategy and growth operations. Prior to joining OTHSolutions, Nabeela was a federal civil servant for 15 years, most notably serving as the Director of Resilience and Response at the White House National Security Council and Associate Chief of Policy at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA).

During her DHS tenure, Nabeela also served as the Deputy Associate Director of Strategy and Resources for the CISA Cybersecurity Division and on a team that stood up the National Risk Management Center. As Senior Advisor to the Secretary at the DHS Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties and to the Assistant Secretary for Infrastructure Protection, Nabeela spent years advancing programs that delivered a range of federal resources and services to communities nationwide.

Building coalitions and multidisciplinary approaches to preventing violence is Nabeela's passion and priority. She is committed to creating safe spaces for government, social service and health care providers, emergency managers, community-based organizations, academia, and law enforcement to engage for the shared purpose of optimizing security and preparedness.

Nabeela is a life-long learner with degrees from the US Naval Postgraduate School, George Mason University, and Virginia Commonwealth University. As an active member of her community, she is a mentor, school volunteer, and guest lecturer. Nabeela was born and raised in the DC area where she resides today.



# PARENTS AND SCHOOLS CAN COMPLETE THE ONE TWO PUNCH FOR SCHOOL SAFETY

By Katherine Schweit

In my monthly newsletter, I deliberately focus on the largest issues, those that present an emergent threat, those that signal a need for new or enforced legislation and those related to desperately needed research.

When the school year is underway, I know thoughts turn to the moment, but I urge those in charge to evaluate the overall quality of a program. Evaluating school preparedness can be done, whether you are a school board member, administrator, teacher or parent. My sure-fire first steps are to ask whether they could answer yes to these seven test questions. I say, be honest and don't answer yes if what you have is just window dressing.

1. Does your school and district have a comprehensive, and written plan on what school safety means, including physical security aspects and changes that need to be made?

2. Do you know what a threat assessment team is, and do you have a functioning one?

3. Do your students, parents, faculty, and staff know who to report concerns to, including access to an anonymous reporting system? Is it properly and repeatedly advertised in school and in the community?

4. Do you regularly share with students and your community signs to report of individuals who may be under duress, on a pathway to commit suicide, or worse?

5. Do you invite law enforcement and other agencies from the federal, state, and local departments to evaluate your school safety plan, so they know what to do in case of an emergency?

6. Do you have a critical response team who will work with first responders no matter the emergency to ensure they have access to utility cut offs, school diagrams, keys, and information on staff and students?

7. Do you train and run drills several times a year to give faculty, staff and

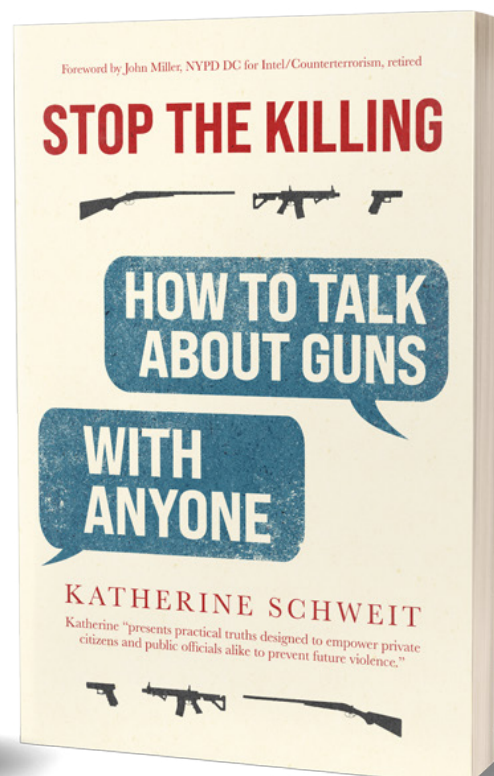
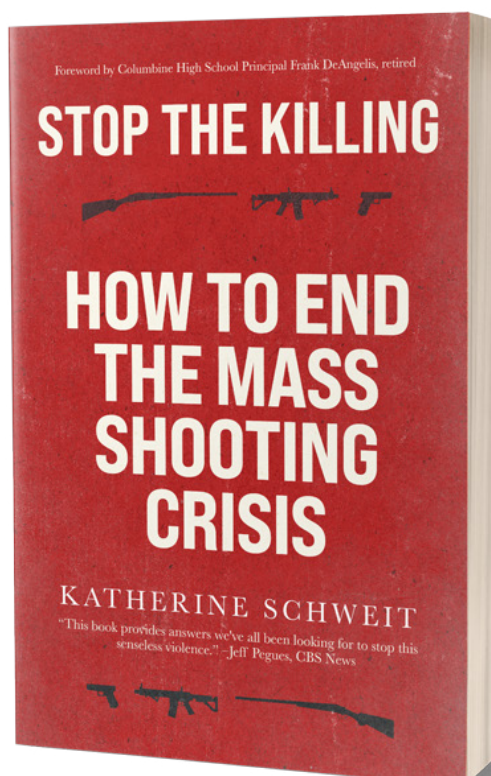
students confidence to respond immediately during an emergency?

I've heard feedback that this test produces a worse score than expected. That's ok. Remember these large undertakings and any step toward safety is a good step forward. To improve a district test score. Consider dividing these efforts up among others, asking who can take the lead. Include the school resource officers, the parent/teacher groups, and local civic groups if available. Many resources are available, including my newsletter and podcast, to help understand what behaviors of concern should be reported to the school, law enforcement, and anonymous reporting systems. Your school counselor or county mental health providers might be able to shed light on good information to share.

Last year, I shared here how one of the larger challenges that looms is to talk to children about targeted violence and train students. It's natural for adults to want to protect children and sometimes that means keeping information from them. But students today are aware that school shootings can occur, and silence just adds to their stress.

Instead, I urge each district to work with school resource officers to run non-scary but informative drills three times a year for the students and staff. Many schools mandate some version of active shooter safety training, but often parents are unaware of the training content. The schools don't share the content with parents, mistakenly believing that school safety details are somehow secret. I'm not suggesting that schools disclose building blueprints, locking codes, and extensive details of their run, hide, fight plans, but there is a middle ground.

Share with parents what you are telling the children and provide them with fact-based talking points to discuss concerns, while reducing their stress and the anxiety a child may begin to feel. Training children in safety





## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Katherine Schweit is an attorney and retired FBI special agent who created and led the FBI's active shooter program after the horrible tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

She joined a White House team working on violence prevention matters led by then-Vice President Biden. She is the author of *Stop the Killing: How to End the Mass Shooting Crisis* and *How to Talk About Guns with Anybody*. She hosts a podcast in its 4th season called *Stop the Killing*.

Bookending her time at the FBI, Ms. Schweit worked as an assistant state's attorney in Chicago and director for security training for a Fortune 300 company. Ms. Schweit brings these public/private best practices to her consulting business, Schweit Consulting, which span from Fortune 100 companies to small private schools, to the government of New Zealand.

She is the author of the FBI's seminal research on mass shootings, "A Study of 160 Active Shooter Incidents in the United States Between 2000 and 2013," and was part of the crisis team responding to shooting incidents at the Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Pentagon, and the Navy Yard in the Washington, DC, area. She shares free best practices and research through her website and regular newsletter found at [katherineschweit.com](http://katherineschweit.com).

A one-time print journalist she has published extensively, including opinion pieces in the New York Times and Chicago's Daily Herald. She is an executive producer on the award-winning film, *The Coming Storm*, widely used in security and law enforcement training throughout the United States and by the U.S. State Department worldwide. This work earned her a second US Attorney General's outstanding contributions award.

She is a recognized expert in mass shooting and active shooter matters, crisis response, workplace violence, and corporate security policies and often is asked to provide on-air television commentary when tragedy occur. She regularly speaks to professional, government, and private organizations.

She is a member of the Association of Threat Assessment Professionals, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the International Association for Healthcare Security and Safety, the local and national chapters of societies supporting retired FBI Special Agents.

She is an adjunct faculty at DePaul University College of Law and Webster University. She has two daughters and lives in Northern Virginia, outside of Washington, DC. She can be reached through [schweitconsulting.com](http://schweitconsulting.com).



shouldn't involve scaring them.

Of course not. Training doesn't mean traumatizing.

People who think so perhaps misunderstand what good training for children looks like. They fear children will be scared by the sound of gunshots, the sight of blood, and people running. We don't train children to avoid streets by showing them pictures of mangled children run over by cars.

Teachers know how to use age-appropriate language to inform and educate without creating fear. Training children focuses on their behavior, empowering them to take part in their own safety. My co-podcaster, Sarah Ferris, was very much against training children when we began our first season of [Stop the Killing podcast](http://Stop the Killing podcast), but she has quite changed her mind. In each episode we talk about a shooting, what went wrong, what signs were missed about the shooter, and how we can all be better prepared.

Sarah came to appreciate that training for the scariest but rare occurrence of targeted violence is more about teaching children to follow directions immediately and listen, be quiet, be brave when they are scared, and even move to safety if they are in a dangerous place. Isn't this the same checklist of training tools adults use to prepare children to respond when there is a fire, lightning storm, or even a tornado? The message to children is all the same: listen to the adults around you, follow directions, and get to a safe location. One often overlooked benefit to training is the opportunity to assure children about the rare nature of shootings in schools. We tell children fires and tornadoes are rare, but it is wise to be prepared just in case.

School districts that work with parents to share safety planning for any potential man-made or natural disaster provide the best one-two punch against potential threats. School officials view children's safety from inside a school's four walls and parents provide the complementary outside view. Training and drills are just one part of that safety plan. If you've already developed quality training and are running drills a few times a year, everyone on the safety beat can answer yes to question number seven and move on to one through six. If not, get to it. ♡



# BACK TO SCHOOL ANXIETY

By Dr. Jill Haltigan



While the start of a new school year is often a welcome respite for parents, it can bring mixed emotions for our children. Many kids express a combination of both excitement and nervous anticipation; enthusiasm at seeing old friends and getting back to extracurricular activities they love, but also some butterflies at the prospect of new teachers and new classes. Some kids, however, have more than just first day jitters. This can be especially true for those entering a transitional year - kindergarten, freshman year of high school - or starting at a new school after a move. Rates of anxiety disorders in children have unfortunately been increasing over the past couple of decades, even prior to the pandemic. The upheaval our kids faced with school closures and limited extracurriculars the last few years certainly had a very deleterious effect on their mental health, as well. Despite these troubling statistics, there is help, and there is hope!

There are things that we as parents and other caretakers can do to help our kids who may be struggling. While anxiety disorders can develop at any time, it's always wise to pay extra attention for potential signs in your children during periods we know are stressful, like the back to school transition. Most crucially is to recognize when an anxiety disorder may exist. All of us feel anxious at times, but it becomes a problem when that feeling becomes excessive, causes changes in our normal behavior or day to day functioning, or leads to physical symptoms.

Anxiety in children may not present as it does in adults. Kids usually cannot recognize that anxiety is underlying why they feel off; and if they do, it may be difficult for them to articulate. Children are often confused as to what is happening to them, and may become more withdrawn, or irritable as a result. They may develop new or worsening sleep issues, including trouble falling asleep, having nightmares and complaining of phantom physical problems like stomach aches or headaches. Some children may suddenly become

clingy, not wanting to be separated from parents or caretakers even for activities that would otherwise bring them joy. Other kids may engage in nervous ticks, like fidgeting, chewing on a shirt collar, or twirling their hair for example. Teachers are our partners in noticing if something might be of concern as well. They may notice a child is unable to focus during their lessons, or spends an inappropriate amount of time double or triple checking their work.

Anxiety can hide both within the perfect student who is overly concerned with getting perfect grades, and within the disruptive class clown who tries to distract away the unpleasant thoughts and worries. It's important to consider anxiety before assuming a child has another medical issue, like attention deficit disorder, depression, or obsessive compulsive disorder. Teachers and school specialists and administrators can help elucidate whether a learning disability, or bullying, or sometimes even substance use, may be a contributing factor, as well. In short, anytime a child's behavior changes it is a good time to start asking more questions about potential underlying causes.

At the root of all anxiety is an underlying fear, even if that fear is not specific or realistic. It's important not to dismiss this emotion or suggest that it's silly to worry about something. Anxiety does not have an on and off switch that kids (or adults!) can activate. Rather, validate your child's feelings. It is scary to go to a new school or meet a new teacher. It is hard to develop new routines and learn new subjects. Remind your child of a time he or she did something new and how well it worked out. Express confidence in them and their ability to figure it out. Reassure your child that you will be there to help and support them as needed. Another helpful tool is easing your child back into a school year routine as summer winds down. For older kids who have been staying up late and sleeping in, moving bedtime up even just 5-10 minutes a night can make a huge difference after a week or two. Younger



children may benefit from starting to pick out their outfits and setting out their toothbrush and toothpaste the night before to help the morning routine run more smoothly. Taking advantage of opportunities to meet new teachers or tour new buildings before the school year starts can also help ease minds worried about not knowing a familiar face or where to go. Expect your children to be more tired the first few weeks as they adjust to all the changes, as well. As the start of the new school year coincides with the last few precious weeks of summer, it can be tempting to cram in a bunch of fun activities at night, but having a bit of down time for your child to simply “chill out” might actually be best for everyone.

Sleep is critically important for children in general, but it's also a critical antidote to anxiety. Take time as the school year starts to help your child establish good sleep hygiene. Set a bedtime, and insist on at least 30 minutes of screen free wind down time prior. Talk to your child's doctor right away if you notice any persistent sleep issues as that can potentially lead to other problems if not treated. Also, physical activity helps manage anxiety and promotes good sleep. Win win! If your child is not involved in organized sports, encourage him or her to take even just 15-20 minutes outside every day to engage in comfortable movement. Consider joining them for a simple walk some evenings, utilizing that time to ask how they're feeling about school so far. Or just spend a few minutes connecting distraction-free at home. Kids aren't usually looking for answers or solutions from their trusted adults, they simply need to know they're being heard.

If you do recognize signs of anxiety in your child as the new school year approaches, and things do not improve as expected once the year gets underway, it's time to seek professional help. Your child's pediatrician or family doctor is the best place to start. While they can refer you to a trusted therapist or psychiatrist, they can also diagnose various anxiety disorders and discuss treatments like including talk therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, and medication. If your child's school has a therapist or counselor, they may also help develop a plan for specific support opportunities available during the school day. Some students will benefit from having a list of strategies that can help when feeling overly anxious; a list that can even be shared with his or her teachers to help build their support network. These options could include excusing a student to the hallway as needed to take some deep breaths in private, or a teacher being sure to check in with a child during a difficult subject if they are apt to be too nervous to raise their hand for help. As anxiety disorders are becoming more common, schools are becoming better equipped to handle them. Many schools are implementing mindfulness training for staff and students, and even have sensory rooms to help restore a sense of calm.

Again, anxiety disorders do not only appear at the start of the school year, but since this is a time of great stress for many children, it's worth discussing. Check in with your child about how they are feeling and how you can help - even if they seem to be handling things just fine. Reminding your children early and often that you are always there to support them, and creating regular opportunities for interaction without distraction, can reinforce this message and engender an open line of communication so that when worries do arise, they can be openly discussed and worked through together.

A burden shared is always a burden lessened. I wish you all good health and a great school year! 💖

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Jill Haltigan, MD, is a family physician working with Mercy Health in Youngstown, OH. In addition to seeing patients of all ages in the outpatient setting, she also serves as a community preceptor for the family St. Elizabeth Hospital Boardman Family Medicine Residency program.

Outside of work she is as avid sports fan, and enjoys reading and cooking. Mostly, she loves to spend time at home with her husband, two young sons, and foster daughter.





# Guiding Your Teen for Success: Top Communication Skills for Job Seekers

By Melanie Upright

**A**s a parent, you play a pivotal role in preparing your teen for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. One crucial aspect of their journey to independence is developing strong communication skills, especially when they're seeking their first job. In this article, we'll explore top communication skills needed by teens in the job market and discuss ways parents can help their children cultivate these skills. You have undoubtedly witnessed the incredible growth and transformation your child is undergoing during their teen years. It's a time of exploration, self-discovery, and, for many, the first steps into the professional world. One of the most critical aspects of this journey is equipping your teen with the communication skills necessary for success in the workplace. Starting a new job can be a scary experience for your teen, particularly when it requires new skills that they may not have fully developed.

Communication skills in both verbal and written communication are needed in professional work environments. They help your teen to express their thoughts with clarity, solve problems that arise and show their adaptability in dynamic workplace scenarios. Workplaces value teamwork which depends on a variety of communication skills including active listening, time management, and conflict resolution.

Parents can help equip their teens to enter the job market confidently and succeed in their careers. Acquiring effective communication skills for the workplace can be accomplished through indirect and direct instruction. Indirect instruction, or in the moment learning, occurs in the day-to-day

conversations you have with your child. Direct instruction relies on a more planned teaching of a skill. The list below includes four communication skills that employers are looking for along with indirect and direct ways to help your child develop these skills.

## 1. Active Listening

Active listening is the foundation of effective communication. Learning how to listen attentively to understand others' perspectives, instructions, and expectations is valuable in the workplace.

- **Modeling Good Listening:** Demonstrate the art of active listening when they talk to you or when you engage in conversations with others.
- **Asking Open-ended Questions:** Encourage your teen to ask questions that invite more detailed responses, fostering deeper connections with peers and potential employers.
- **Avoiding Interruptions:** Teach them the importance of not interrupting others while they're speaking and waiting for their turn to contribute to the conversation.

## 2. Effective Verbal Communication

Clear and concise verbal communication is vital for job interviews, meetings, and daily interactions.

- **Practice Mock Interviews:** Conduct mock job interviews at home to help your teen gain confidence in articulating their thoughts and experiences.





- **Expand Vocabulary:** Encourage your teen to read, explore new words, and use them in everyday conversations. This will enhance their ability to express themselves more effectively.
- **Public Speaking:** Encourage participation in activities like school presentations, debate clubs, or community events to boost their confidence in public speaking.

### 3. Non-Verbal Communication

Non-verbal cues, such as body language and facial expressions, often convey more than words alone.

- **Body Language Awareness:** Help them understand how posture, gestures, and eye contact can influence the way they are perceived by others.
- **Role-Playing:** Engage in role-playing exercises to demonstrate the impact of non-verbal cues in different social situations.
- **Video Recordings:** Record practice interviews or presentations to review and improve their non-verbal communication skills.

### 4. Conflict Resolution Skills

Conflict is an inevitable part of life. Teens should learn how to handle disagreements and conflicts in a constructive manner. Guide your teen in conflict resolution by:

- **Model Conflict Resolution:** Demonstrate healthy conflict resolution techniques in your own relationships.
- **Teach Empathy:** Help them understand others' perspectives and feelings during a conflict.
- **Role-Play Scenarios:** Practice conflict resolution scenarios to give them practical experience.

Effective communication skills are paramount for workplace success for individuals of all ages. Parents can make a significant difference in their teens' development in this area. By supporting your child's growth in these vital communication skills, you're equipping your teen with tools that will benefit them throughout their lives. 💖



## About The Author

Melanie Upright has more than 25 years of experience in education. She is the author of *More Time to Lead; The Principal's Guide to Empowered Teachers, Successful Students and Satisfied Parents* and creator of "Four Perspectives: A Framework for Helping Struggling Learners."

She is the founder of the Center for Interpersonal Communication where she provides training in critical communication skills for leaders informed by her training as a speech-language pathologist.

She is also the Project Administrator for Leadership and Educational Impact with the Johns Hopkins University Center for Technology in Education where she leads schools, districts, and states in the Dynamic Impact Team-Directed Continuous Improvement approach.

# EVERY PARENT NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT THE CRISIS OF ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

By Ernie Allen



In 2014 the UK Prime Minister David Cameron said, “the online exploitation of children is happening on an almost industrial scale” and called it “a major international crime of our age.”

In 2019 the New York Times wrote, “Twenty years ago, online images were a problem; 10 years ago, an epidemic. Now, the crisis is at a breaking point.” That is my message to you today.

It is difficult to say how large the problem is because, overwhelmingly, these crimes are not reported. What we do know is the problem is large and global:

- 21.7 million referrals of child sexual abuse material to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) during 2020;
- 94% of the child sexual abuse material found online by the UK-based Internet Watch Foundation contained images of children 13 or younger; 39% of children 10 or younger;
- INHOPE, the network of internet hotlines, reported that 89% of its child sexual abuse material reports involved children between ages 3 and 13.
- For the calendar year 2018 INTERPOL

estimated that 1.8 million men with sexual interest in children were newly online.

- UNICEF estimates that 1 in 3 internet users is a child.

The problem is exploding together with the challenge to address it. Prior to the internet, those with a sexual interest in children felt isolated, aberrant, and alone. However, today they are part of a global community that shares images, fantasies, techniques, and even real children. And they do it with virtual anonymity.

One researcher estimated at least 1% of the male population is aroused by pedophilic stimuli (prepubescent children) and 3% by pedophilic and hebephiliac stimuli (pubescent children). There are 3.5 billion males today (1% is 35 million).

While all of those sexually attracted to children do not act on those interests, many do. A 2016 study in the Journal of Sex Research reported that 2.2% to 4.4% of adult men have knowingly viewed child sexual abuse material of pre-pubescent children online. 4.4% is 140 million people. INTERPOL reported that one website alone received 6.5 million views in its first month of operation.

The internet, social media, Covid-19, and

the creation of the Dark Web have made the problem much worse. One world leader said, “There are networks spanning the world, children abused to order.” Today, children are being sexually abused live on camera and are witnessed by paying customers around the world. This is common and a particular challenge in high-poverty countries with large numbers of vulnerable children.

Social media revolutionized communication and changed the world, mostly for the better. But the unintended consequences include cyberbullying, youth suicides, sexting, sextortion, revenge porn, and online grooming of children for sexual exploitation. A particular problem is self-generated indecent imagery, including sexting, and sextortion, (when an adult grooms, coerces, or manipulates a child into performing sexually).

Lack of supervised internet use has exposed children to a far greater risk of sexual exploitation online, including sexual coercion, extortion, and manipulation by offenders. Self-generated material has increased, as children experience most of their social lives online. The increase in emotionally vulnerable children also presents a far greater



risk for increased grooming by offenders. With more people at home due to COVID-19 online exploitation of children has dramatically increased.

The US government created a tool that enabled anonymous internet use. The intention was to protect intelligence communications, and political dissidents, journalists, and others from retaliation by repressive regimes. However, others are now using these tools which have created a secret internet called the “Dark Web,” where anonymous users can evade detection. New investigative tools are being developed and enforcement is increasing but cannot keep up. One UK university estimated that while just 2% of Dark Web sites are pedophilia sites, they account for 80% of Dark Web traffic. Those with a sexual interest in children gravitate to online places where they can operate with anonymity and little risk.

The threats today are complex and challenging due to poor awareness, hidden victims, and the issues of privacy vs anonymity.

Public officials face many serious problems, and online child sexual exploitation is one. Yet, few understand it. In INTERPOL's International Child Sexual Exploitation database, more than 60% of the children identified and rescued have been prepubescent. The victims of these crimes are not who our leaders or the public think they are.

There is dramatic underreporting. When child sexual abuse is photographed and images posted online, reporting drops to virtually zero. These children do not tell. They are harmed when they are abused, and again every time their photo is redistributed.

There are new innovative technology tools. However, they must be used far more broadly. The top priority is victim identification, enabling more cases against offenders, and the rescue of many more victims.

Some advocates argue that tools to detect, report, and remove child sexual abuse material and stop online grooming of children violate the privacy rights of users. However, privacy and child protection are not mutually exclusive. Whose privacy? Each child sexual abuse image is a crime scene photo, memorializing the rape or sexual assault of a child. Further, more companies are implementing end-to-end encryption, eliminating knowledge of what their users are actually doing on their platforms.

A lot is being done. Yet, the role of the parent is more important than ever before. Younger and younger children are online. Millions of children no longer access the internet from the PC at home, but via mobile devices they carry around in their hands.

What can parents do? The US Department of Justice offers helpful hints for parents, “Keeping Children Safe Online” which include the following:

- Discuss internet safety and develop an online safety plan with your children.
- Supervise young children's use of the internet, including periodically checking their profiles and posts.
- Review games, apps, and social media sites before they are downloaded.
- Adjust privacy settings and use parental controls.
- Tell children to avoid sharing personal information, photos and videos online.
- Teach children about the importance of saying “no” to inappropriate requests.
- Be alert to potential signs of abuse.
- Encourage children to tell a parent, guardian or other trusted adult if anyone asks them to engage in sexual activity or other inappropriate behavior.
- Immediately report suspected online enticement or sexual exploitation of a child.

The assessment that this crisis is at a breaking point is not an exaggeration. Each report of child sexual abuse material is of a real child who needs to be safeguarded. It is not too late to make a difference. But there is more to do and it starts in your home. 🍀



## ABOUT ERNIE ALLEN

**E**rnies Allen serves as an advisor to governments, law enforcement, technology companies, and others on digital economy, public-private partnerships and child protection. Appointed by former Prime Minister David Cameron he chairs the WeProtect Global Alliance, a global initiative to combat online child sexual abuse and exploitation.

He serves on several boards including the Vatican's Child Dignity Alliance. Previously he was Founding Chairman and former President & CEO of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children and the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children.

# THINKING THROUGH School Safety

By Jason Stoddard



2020 has been a year of evolution. The learning curve has been sharp and seemingly relentless. We have been inundated with information, often conflicting, almost to the point of exhaustion in terms of what decisions need to be made when and by whom. I have spent my life in the business of crisis management and safety, as both a law enforcement officer and now as a Director of School Safety. Along the way I have learned some critical lessons that apply now and will apply through *and after* the pandemic. The great news is that most of this information is not entirely new at all. In fact, most of us already have learned the fundamentals of safety. Whether related to Covid-19, at school, or on the playground, the basic principles still apply; master the fundamentals, and success will follow. For those who work in the school safety arena, there are always pressures to invest in new technology designed to add additional levels of safety and security.

If only it were that easy, we would have solved all of these issues long ago. Truth be told, it doesn't take a lot of money, training, gadgets, or equipment to help our kids stay safe. While the list of safety fundamentals is long, there are three foundational principles that all others grow from.

- 1) Teach your children to have a safety plan.
- 2) Teach them to pay attention to their surroundings.
- 3) Empower them to get an adult involved when necessary.

Having a plan and paying attention to your surroundings go hand in hand. Whenever we get on a plane, the flight crew goes over the safety procedures so that passengers both understand there is a plan, and also for each to think through what their responsibilities are if that plan has to be used. Remember the line, *"There are four exits on the plane, two in the front and two over the wings. The closest exit may be behind you."*

This is the crew telling us to find the nearest exit and subliminally instructing each of us to count the number of seat backs between our seat and the door. The airlines have mastered the ability to communicate important information without creating anxiety and hypervigilance. Parents and schools need to be doing the same thing for our children. Our children need to know how to identify interior and exterior exits (including windows), what signs mean (even before they can read), and where to go if they get lost or separated from their group. These are necessary skills that once learned and practiced, will stay with them for a lifetime.

Having tough conversations without instilling fear or anxiety can be difficult. However, this is where a little creative thinking can be helpful.

Make a game of finding exits when you are in the mall or big box store. Next time your child says they need to use the restroom, have them look for the signs then lead the way. This reinforces visual clues and scanning, along with self-sufficiency.

Check out [www.ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov) for children's preparedness games. Show your children how parking lots are labeled and what clues they can use to find the car if you get separated.





*“Teach  
your children  
to have a safety plan.”*

Have them take a picture of your vehicle and background, so they have a reference point to navigate back to where you parked. Having a *Plan-B* could literally become a lifesaver. During a time of crisis or a critical incident, cell phone service may not work because of the building's construction or overloaded circuits.

The art of teaching a child when to involve another adult, in any situation, is a tremendously difficult task for many parents, especially for those raised in a generation of “stranger-danger.” Maintaining an open and honest dialogue with our children is one of the most critical tasks parents will ever do. There is much debate over how these tough conversations should go, but children must know they are loved and cared for. They must understand some secrets are unacceptable, and they also must also know we will not judge, over- or under-react.

Out of the three safety fundamentals, this one is the most difficult for parents, but is arguably the most important. The likelihood that our child will be exposed to a serious crisis themselves is low. However, it is more likely that they will see something, or hear something, which may cause harm to either themselves, or someone else, during their childhood. If, for no other reason than that, we must figure out a way to keep our kids talking to trusted adults who can respond appropriately.

The world is a complicated and complex place. Understanding how to navigate through it can be made easier with the application of safety fundamentals and ongoing conversations, actually talking and listening to our kids, not speaking around them. ♡

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jason Stoddard is the Director of School Safety and Security for the Charles County Public Schools (MD). He is responsible for sustaining a safe learning and work environment for over 27,000 students and nearly 4,000 staff members. Since coming to the public schools in July of 2018, he has created the Office of School Safety and Security, been awarded over 2 million dollars in grant money, implemented major evolutions such as revolving backgrounds for all employees, options-based active shooter response training, the “I love u guys” Foundation Standard Response Protocols, a state of art radio communication system, and implemented a model family reunification process. Prior to joining the schools, he retired as a Lieutenant with the Charles County Sheriff’s Office in Southern Maryland. During his twenty-plus years with the Sheriff’s Office, he has served as a patrol officer, community policing officer, school resource officer, counter-terrorism officer, and crime prevention officer. His executive command assignments include tours within the Patrol Division and the Special Operations Section. His final assignment was as the Commander the Homeland Security and Intelligence Section, where he created and built a real-time crime center, the first in Southern Maryland. Mr. Stoddard has a Master’s degree in Organizational Leadership and a Bachelor’s Degree in Criminal Justice. He is a graduate of Northwestern University, School of Police Staff and Command, and the FBI Law Enforcement Executive Development Program. Mr. Stoddard is an adjunct professor at three universities; teaches executive-level leadership for the Maryland Police Training Commission, has authored several articles for magazines on topics ranging from school safety to organizational leadership, and serves as a consultant for the Department of Justice and National Institutes of Justice.



# Family Preparedness *Is a Team Sport - Ideas for Engagement*

By Dan O'Connor



Every September the United States' emergency management community reminds us that it is National Preparedness Month. This is a reminder and an opportunity to reflect and embrace the importance of preparing for life's interruptions, disasters and emergencies and that they could happen at any time.

Understanding this, I am always reminded of a quote regarding readiness from Louis Pasteur. Pasteur, the late French microbiologist, chemist, pioneer of germ theory of disease, and inventor of the process of pasteurization noted "chance favors only the prepared mind." By this, he probably meant that your preparation could improve a bad situation and what can be done in unexpected or surprising times.

Preparation used to be a hallmark American behavior trait. Preparation was actually a necessity. We'd grow vegetables, preserve meats, canned foods, capture seeds, put "something away for a rainy day" and take ownership of our ability to weather the bad times. A lot has changed over the years. We have been blessed with an abundance and access to many conveniences. The technical marvels and logistical magicians have blessed (and cursed) us with a have anything, anytime, brought to us anywhere culture. That ideology doesn't promote readiness and preparedness and can really undermine self-reliance.

The overwhelming majority of Americans have an expectation that someone else will do "it". How is that? There are certainly many reasons and historical points along the way but our great logistic acumen, abilities to harness economies of scale, and a transition from a near exclusive manufacturing economy to a service and consump-

tion economy drove a change in consumer and preparedness behavior. A variety of other circumstances also moved us away from the ability to plan and prepare. Life is innately busier now than, say, 50 years ago. One simply needs to see the necessity for two incomes, the cost of living, and a host of other factors keeping people busy, working, and distracted. The attention economy also prohibits us time to simply stop and think. We've become conditioned to assume that someone else will do it and the can-do American spirit has waned into paralysis. We became apathetic.

People have the most extraordinary ability to rationalize and explain away their apathy. Apathy is a lack of interest in life activities or interactions with others. It can affect your ability to maintain a relationship, develop skills, perform at a job and thrive in a crisis. Over time, life and all its challenges can become monotonous. Apathy can and does touch everyone at some point and for a variety of reasons. Our attitude and awareness of apathy is real. What we choose to do about it is also real. We can overcome our apathy and paralysis by maintaining a bias for action. A bias for action is an intentional willingness to evaluate and take risks, a willingness to seize the initiative and embrace the fact that we're far more capable and adaptable than we realize.

So, what can you do? Here are three things everyone can do to elevate and enhance their readiness; gamify, rehearse, and think about decisions. The first one is gamifying the problem. Gamifying is the application of elements of game playing to an activity and problem to be solved. It's also a superior way to get children to become critical thinkers. How? Propose a problem. How would you do "X"? Where





does our drinking water come from? What should we do? Can we charge our phone without a charger? How? What five things should we bring on every trip? The exercise and follow-on conversation create unique opportunities to learn and the ability to see a solution instead of seeing only problems.

Then, once conversations are done there can be a transition to the second thing; rehearsals and drills. Practice, practice, practice! The rehearsals and exercises don't have to be elaborate or sophisticated. A family huddle prior to an event can constitute an exercise. Assigned regular tasks and chores build the capacity of responsibility and a sense of ownership. Thinking and doing these kinds of activities is no different than any board game and can be really fun.

Another thought exercise or drill is to schedule some time every week to conduct a readiness evaluation. It's also not a sophisticated or arduous task. Putting something on a schedule builds an intentional, thinking time and reflective space to evaluate "what if" scenarios. It can be as simple as identifying things you might need in a "go" bag with food, water, and batteries all the way to identifying relocation spots and evacuation routes.

Third, try using some of that exercise and reflective time to build a few decision trees. Decision trees can be very helpful in identifying how and what to do to maintain initiative and self-empowerment in an emergency. A decision tree is a tool that uses a branching or "tree" model of decisions and their possible consequences, including potential outcomes, resource costs, and each decision's utility. For example, what would a decision tree look like if there was no power? What about disruptive weather? Even breaking down on the side of the road can be exercised beforehand. Thinking negates the crushing feeling of helplessness. We are never helpless. We are powerful beyond our wildest dreams if we're thinking and problem solving.

Choosing to be prepared and choosing not to be prepared are decisions we make. If we decide to exercise the pain of discipline and be an active participant, when interruption and crisis happen, we'll be more capable and responsive. If, however, we choose not to be disciplined in our approach and procrastinate what can be done today for tomorrow, then we will have the pain of regret. We don't want to regret not being active participants in our success. Playing games, exercising and drilling, and making time for thought and decisions will always pay dividends and hone your skills for that time when calamity comes.

The prepared mind always beats the paralyzed one. Be prepared! 💖



## About The Author

Dan is sought after and recognized homeland security authority with a wealth of experience in exigent leadership, crisis management, emergency management, continuity of operations, and security/anti-terrorism.

He is a graduate of the Naval Postgraduate School, Harvard Kennedy School, Swedish Defense University, FBI National Academy, and the United States Marine Corps Command and Staff College.

Dan has played a significant role in numerous high profile and critical assignments. Dan has provided security and emergency management across the United States and its territories, and internationally. He has directly supported over 1000 declared disasters and served as the anti-terrorism officer/emergency manager in Washington, DC, during the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001.

He has consulted and produced various security and emergency management operations at the 1996 Summer Olympics, 2002 Winter Olympics, the 2004 Summer Olympic Games, and the 2016 Summer Olympics. He is a presenter, lecturer, and published authority in emergency management, asset protection, information security, leadership development, and physical security. He has also consulted for four of the largest marathons in the United States and the Super Bowl. The combination of leading Marines, large event management, emergency management, organizational leadership, anti-terrorism, and high-risk experience makes Dan O'Connor uniquely qualified for helping an organization both operationally and strategically.

# OH NO! *TIME FOR AN EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT VISIT*

By Dr. Nick Robell



A trip to the Emergency Department (ED) is something many parents will experience at some point with their children. I hope this article will help prepare you for what to expect. Everyone's emergency is unique. Nothing is too big or too small. Emergencies seem to happen at the most inconvenient times - on vacation, late at night, early in the morning, on weekends.

The ED is open 24 hours a day and 365 days a year. Across the country, EDs are safety nets for anyone who needs them. No person who has an emergency can be turned away without an evaluation. That is against the law. And you should never feel guilty for seeking emergency care.

When you decide to seek care for an acute illness and you are not dialing 911, you have options. Along with the typical hospital-based ED, there are Specialty Emergency Departments, Free-Standing Emergency Departments and Urgent Care centers.

Urgent Care (UC) centers are different. Urgent Care centers are smaller, have fewer resources and are not typically open 24 hours a day. Generally care is faster compared to an ED but there may not be a physician on-site.

X-rays, nasal/ throat swabs, urine testing and limited blood work can be done at most UCs. Rashes, runny noses, coughs,

minor injuries, and cuts can all be managed at an Urgent Care Center.

Chest pain, difficulty breathing, abdominal pain and most neurological complaints should be seen at an ED since CT scans, ultrasounds and comprehensive blood testing cannot be performed at an UC. Larger hospital based EDs have more resources but depending on volume of patients, may have longer wait times.

Obviously, depending on your location you may not have a choice in the type of acute care facility. If you have time to decide, an UC may be a better option for you. These facilities can save time and money, yet still offer high quality care.

## WHEN TO SEEK CARE

I would always err on the side of caution and seek care if you are unsure. If you are on the fence, you have resources. Many pediatricians and physician offices have on-call services. You will speak with a nurse or a triage provider initially. Many times, a provider can give advice or expedite care as an outpatient.

For certain things like gynecological, dental or eye-related issues you may be able to call local clinics and be seen the next day or the same day. The 911 operator can even provide advice as well. Ultimately, if you do not feel comfortable with your loved one at home, seek care.

## PREPARE FOR THE ED OR UC

Prior to bringing your child, please consider giving medications for pain or fever such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen. Bring items to keep them occupied. You may bring food and beverages but check with the nurse beforehand. If there is a chance your child may need surgery, eating can delay this.

Common questions we ask about your child include vaccination history, last dose of acetaminophen or ibuprofen, and allergies. If your child is under the age of 2, you should know how many wet diapers and stools in a day, along with details regarding the pregnancy with and birth of that child. Please be prepared with this information.

## HOW DOES THE PROCESS LOOK

When you arrive, you will initially be seen by a triage provider. That person will gather your child's vital signs, basic information, and some details about your reason for coming that day. Based on this information, the triage provider will assign your child an acuity level. Higher acuity patients will be moved out of the triage area sooner to be seen. Once you and your child have been seen and evaluated, testing and treatment may be recommended.

If you have questions, ask them. If you have a specific concern, please mention this as soon as possible. You should understand the rationale for every action made by the



nurses, techs, or the physician, and you should be able to explain what happened at the ED to someone else.

We want to make sure you understand and are comfortable with the plan. Physicians make recommendations but ultimately the patient and family need to agree to the plan. You always have the right to decline any recommendations. After services are completed, a decision is made regarding next steps i.e., your child may be discharged home, admitted to the hospital or transferred to another hospital. Often you will be advised to follow-up with your child's pediatrician after discharge.

Unfortunately, many patients leave the ED without a concrete diagnosis. This can be frustrating but is very

common. As physicians, we commonly exclude things like urinary tract infections or appendicitis. However, there are no perfect tests in medicine. Disease processes may be developing, and the diagnosis can be missed early even with the gold standard test.

Even though you are being discharged, please remember that processes develop over time and do not dismiss ongoing pain or progressive symptoms. Most pediatric patients do very well after visits to the EDs and ultimately are discharged home. As Emergency Physicians, we are here to help and many of us are parents too. 💙



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

My name is Nick Robell. I am an Emergency Medicine physician in west Michigan. Including my residency, I have worked in three different states and across all kinds of Emergency Departments. I have worked in nearly every setting, large urban hospitals, suburban and rural ones too. I have also worked in sub-specialty hospitals, community Emergency Departments, Free-Standing Emergency Departments and even Urgent Care Centers.

My wife and I have two wonderful girls, Josie (4) and Charlotte (2). They have big personalities, and neither is shy about telling their physician parents what to do. My hope with this article is to help you navigate life's little emergencies and a visit to the Emergency Department.



# WHAT I *LEARNED* ABOUT PREPAREDNESS WHILE HANGING OUT WITH MY DAD

by Sophia Ward

**W**hen I first authored this article 3 years ago, I was a senior in high school and that seems like so long ago! Now, I'm a junior at George Mason University, majoring in Government and International Politics, and minoring in Intelligence Studies and Chinese. Over these past few years, I have realized how important it is to make meaningful connections with people, as my Dad did throughout his entire life and career. He knew people from all over the world, and his address book was literally a real book: thick. I've known some of my dad's colleagues all of my life, and they've helped me navigate through my first few years of college by editing my resume, helping me to understand job postings, hosting me in my foreign travel and most importantly, they taught me how to develop critical thinking and communication skills. Another invaluable lesson I learned early, and I practice daily is about respect and loyalty. It is how my Dad lived his life as a U.S. Marine, as a N.Y.P.D. Police officer and as a world-renowned criminologist.



**A**s far back as I can remember, Saturdays were spent with my dad. We'd start the day at Home Depot, and a bookstore or lunch usually followed. Our house in Texas and then in Connecticut had large yards or pastures which required maintenance of some sort. No matter how many tools we had in our shed, he always needed something new. Once my mom confirmed that nothing was planned for the day, we'd head off to Home Depot. We'd wander the aisles as he'd talk about the weekend projects. Thinking back, I realize it was about spending time together in places that he loved, getting me familiar with tools, and instilling confidence in me. Saturdays were the time when our conversations about preparedness and resilience began, and my awareness of my surroundings started improving.

## Lessons about 'observing others'

Together, we would watch people and try to pick out those who did not seem to be familiar with the area, or somehow seemed out of place. My Dad was a top expert in the criminal justice field. He would talk to me about how to observe

without being observed; to identify things that did not seem quite right - maybe how someone was dressed or what they were carrying. Because of what he did for a living, he also talked to me about the danger of jumping to conclusions without evidence, and about "profiling" because of someone's race or gender. He taught me to consider possibilities and different explanations about what I saw. He would also challenge me to tell him what I would do if something was wrong in certain situations. We would talk about who I'd call first, what I would say, knowing my exact location, how to exit an area, and where a meeting spot might be.

## Lessons about communication and personal space

One of my Dad's pet peeves was about people who were not aware of personal space or boundaries. Again, in Home Depot while shopping, I learned that it's okay to say, "excuse me," in a loud voice as a way to ask people to move. It bothered him when people would stop or hesitate when they reached the bottom of an escalator or exit an elevator - especially in airports. Likely, it is because they are un-

familiar with the layout of the airport or where exits are. While an inconvenience for us, he knew it was also an opportunity for theft, something he learned traveling the world. By the time I was eleven years old, I had visited over thirty countries with him and my Mom. When I was old enough, we would practice our observation, awareness and communication skills





together. I learned so much about different cultures on those trips, and I know it was because both my parents wanted me to become a responsible global citizen.

#### **Some lessons were just from watching him**

My Mom pointed out that my Dad always insisted on sitting in a position to see the main entrance if we were in a restaurant, for example. It was something he learned as a young police officer for the NYPD and also as a U.S. Marine – to be loyal and to protect others. One time I sat in what I knew would be his choice seat. My mom said, “He’s going to make you move.” As a ‘daddy’s girl,’ I really didn’t think he would. When he got into the restaurant, he looked at me, smiled and made me move to a different seat. I am 17 now and I try to sit facing the door. While I may not be able to fight off someone, I want to see potential trouble before it happens and warn my friends and family. I always make sure I know where the exits are and where I could hide if I could not get out. I also try to keep my phone charged in case I have to call for help or hide for a long time.

#### **Lessons learned while doing things together**

Also, we learned the hard way to always close your trunk when leaving Home Depot, especially if you have gallons of paint in the back. One time he didn’t close the trunk all the way. As we drove onto a main road, we saw our newly bought paint flying out of the trunk at 50 miles per hour. Luckily, nobody was behind us.

Another important lesson about preparedness he taught me was to use my observation skills when I was old enough to drive by myself. That means paying attention to any cars that seem to be following me for any extended period of time. I know I should change my route, pull off the road and turn around, and if I feel in any danger, pull into a police or fire station.

One of my Dad’s favorite sayings was that if you’re not early, you’re late. We would always leave what seemed like a million minutes early for any kind of outing. While I didn’t understand it totally back then, he taught me that being on time for things

is important and is a sign of respect for others. When he would drive us to my softball games, we would arrive early and be there in case anyone needed extra help. He wanted me fully ready when the game started and not fiddling around looking for things or delaying my teammates. Now, I cannot remember not being early for everything. Before I leave the house, I plan backwards and calculate time, distance, traffic, weather and the unplanned slow driver or accident-causing delays.

Unfortunately my dad passed away 6 years ago, just before my 12th birthday, but the lessons I learned from him will stay with me forever. He instilled in me the confidence to tackle problems that will come along, to always be aware and prepared, and to teach those skills to others; it was his way of ‘paying it forward,’ which he did with students for over 50 years! My mom and I will soon be moving into a smaller home. The condo we’re looking at, as it turns out, is right behind a Home Depot! I think my Dad would be happy. 💙



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sophia Ward is now a Junior at George Mason University.

She majors in Government and International Politics, and minors in both Intelligence Studies and Chinese.

She is currently interning at the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and has her eyes firmly set on becoming a member of the Intelligence Community.



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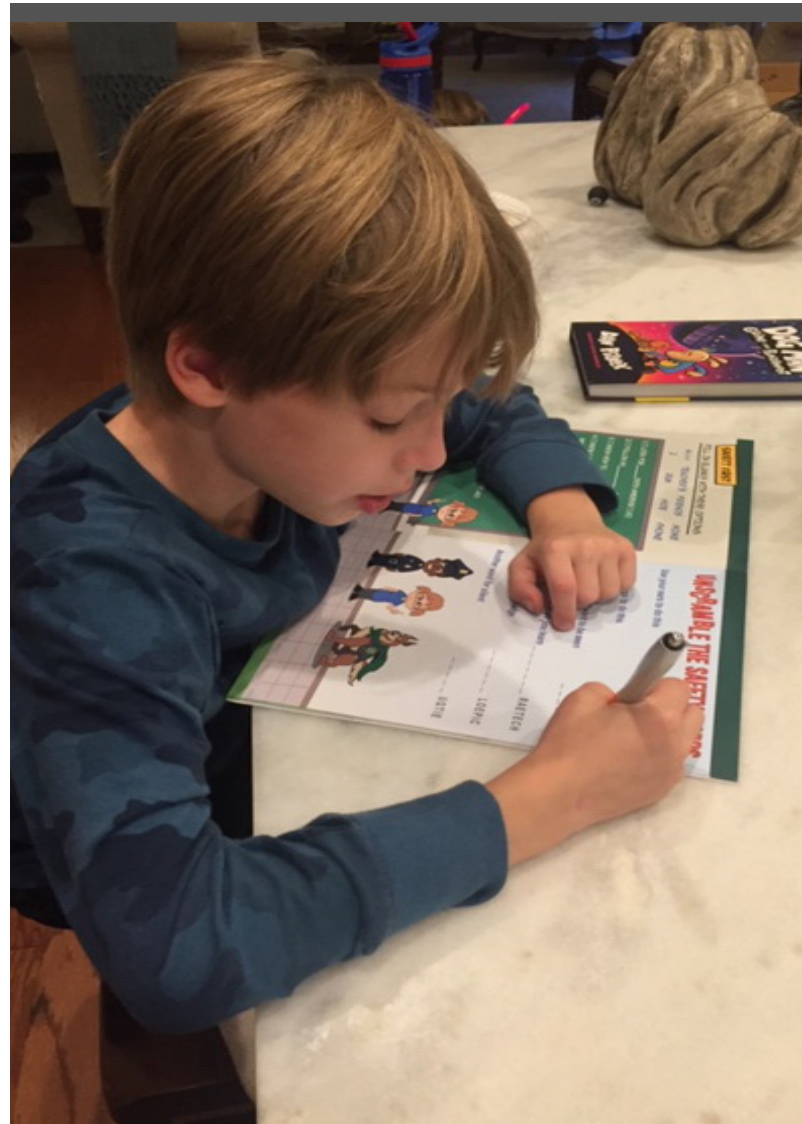


## The Parents With Preparedness Resource Guide

### INTRODUCTION

The following resource guide has been specially curated for you and your family. It is full of useful links to help you stay informed, safe, and prepared.

## Back to School Safety Resource



**SCHOOLSAFETY.GOV**

August 2023

### Back-to-School Resources

**Create safe and supportive environments for students and educators returning for a new school year.**

Back-to-school season represents the start of a new academic year and a time of excitement and anticipation for the kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) community. It's also an important reminder of the continuous need to create and maintain safe and supportive environments for students and educators.

School safety encompasses several important elements, which span planning and prevention activities to protection and mitigation measures, to response and recovery actions during and after an actual incident. By integrating these various elements – and applying them to their individualized and unique needs, challenges, and settings – schools can create comprehensive and holistic school safety plans, procedures, and systems.

Find Resources to Create a Safer School

SchoolSafety.gov provides one-stop access to resources and evidence-based practices on a range of school safety topics and threats. **Visit the site to inform and enhance your school safety programs and activities** in preparation for and during the back-to-school season and beyond.

Key school safety issues and strategies to **support a safe back-to-school season** include:





A one-stop shop to free resources to help keep your K-12 community safe this school year!

[DOWNLOAD HERE](#)



# Hotlines for Help

Each year, millions of people reach out to helplines for support, counseling, and guidance. You don't have to be in immediate danger to call a helpline. Anyone experiencing concerns, distress, or seeking more information, this is just a small sampling of support available.



The National Alliance on Mental Illness - 1-800-950-6264  
<https://www.nami.org/help>

Suicide and Crisis Lifeline – Dial 988  
[Lifeline \(988lifeline.org\)](https://988lifeline.org)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Helpline - 1-800-662-HELP (4357)  
[Find help for substance abuse | USAGov](https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help)

The National Domestic Violence - 1-800-799-7233  
<https://www.thehotline.org>

The National Child Abuse - 1-800-422-4453  
<https://www.childhelp.org>

More information on eating disorders, bullying, addictions, and what to expect when calling a helpline, visit HelpGuide at [What to Expect When Calling a Helpline - HelpGuide.org](https://www.helpguide.org)





# CYBER SAFETY

Be Internet Awesome teaches kids the fundamentals of digital citizenship and safety so they can explore the online world with confidence.

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Proactive Steps to Defend Against Cybersecurity Threats to your School

[LEARN MORE](#)

Internet Safety for Kids and Teaching Kids to be Safe from Online Predators

[LEARN MORE](#)

The Organization for Social Media Safety

[LEARN MORE](#)



A photograph of three people—two women and one man—collaborating in a professional setting. They are gathered around a table, looking at a laptop. The woman on the left is Black with her hair in a high ponytail, wearing a light-colored blazer. The woman in the center is white with blonde hair, wearing a tan blazer over a black top. The man on the right is white with a beard, wearing a blue button-down shirt. They are all looking intently at the laptop screen. In the background, there are white shelves with various books and documents.

# Join Us

And Make  
*a Difference*

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# PARENTS WITH PREPAREDNESS

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Are you a parent, caregiver, first responder, or educator who would like to contribute to *Parents With Preparedness* magazine? Send us your thoughts, or article submissions to:

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