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## Break Out of the Car!

Parents are always telling their children to be careful with things or they may break. There is a time, however, when you happy for them to break something: if they're pulled into the car of a person who wants to hurt them.

Imagine that a bad person grabs your child and throws him or her into his trunk. The lid slams shut. It's dark and scary. Do your children know what to do?

They could kick and scream, but it's doubtful anyone would hear them, because the car is moving down the road. You need to teach your children to first calm down, and remember, there are things they can do to help themselves.

### Disable the Brake Lights

Every time a driver taps the brakes of a car to slow down or stop, bright red lights flash in the back of the car. This is to warn the drivers behind to slow down or stop, and to avoid accidents. If a police officer sees a car with a burnt-out brake light, he or she is more likely to pull that car over to ticket them.

Disabling the brake lights is easy. The brakes lights are in the same place in every car -- in the back, where the trunk is. So, if your child is locked in a trunk, teach him to yank all the wires that lead to the taillights. Often the wires are hidden behind panels and carpet. Mark sure your children know to find and pull the wires all the way out.

### Flag Other Drivers



In addition, teach your child that he or she can let drivers behind the car know they're there by trying to get their hand outside of the trunk.

Though it may look like there isn't a space between the trunk and the bottom of the car, many cars have weather stripping or rubber seals around their trunk lids. A child can start tearing it away, or try to move it aside, then try to flap his hand out the small space between the trunk lid and the back of the car. He or she may feel the outside air or maybe even see daylight. Teach kids to keep their hand outside, moving the fingers, in case someone should drive up behind the car. That will alert other drivers to call the police.

It is also important that children know to listen and be aware. Are there other cars around? Is there traffic? If so, then every time the car comes to a complete stop, your child can use both ir feet to kick the trunk lid as hard as he or she can. Someone driving near the vehicle might see signs that someone is trapped in the trunk and call the police.

### Cause a Crash

Teach your child that if he or she is forced into someone's car and cannot get out, that as soon as the vehicle starts to move, but before it has a chance to pick up much speed, jump into the driver's lap kicking, screaming and dislodging the driver's hands from the steering wheel. This will cause the vehicle to run into something like a garbage can, mailbox, or parked car, which could disable the abductor's vehicle or involve other people. Your child should only try this if the car is traveling at a very low speed. It does involve the risk of injury to the child and others. As the parent, you need to decide whether the benefit outweighs the risk.

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Practice this maneuver in a stationary vehicle in the driveway, starting with the child in the front seat, then the back seat. If this maneuver is carried out successfully, and with a little bit of luck, the abductor may not travel more than a block or two without anyone getting hurt. If the child is left alone in the vehicle at any time, he or she can try the button maneuver to disable the vehicle.

Another time to cause a crash is at a stop light or stop sign, when there's a car in front of the vehicle. Your child may be on the other side of the car, but the abductor won't be expecting a child to throw him or herself onto the floor on his or her side and press the gas. A child can tell which pedal is the gas simply by watching which pedal the driver pushes when they stop and go. By pressing on it as hard as he or she can, your child may send the car smashing into the car ahead. Nothing gets the attention of other people like a car hitting them!

#### **Keep the Car from Starting**

Another way to break the car is to make sure the driver can't restart the car once it's stopped. If the driver gets out of the car and takes the keys, your child can make sure the keys won't go back in by snapping off a small button from his or her clothes and putting it into the ignition, just like you would a coin in a video game. This should prevent the key from going in the ignition switch. You may want to sew a couple of extra buttons inside your child's clothing just for this purpose. Make sure the button is the right size. Of course, other items, like chewing gum, nail files, and even small pebbles caught in the soles of a child's shoes can also be jammed into the car's ignition to prevent it from starting.

Teach your child that if he or she doesn't have a small button, or can't find anything that will jam into the key slot, he or she can try to break the car by leaning on the gear selector and trying to break it off. Of course, if you're at a gas station, the best thing is to get out of the car, but, if you're locked in and simply can't, always try to break the car.

Sometimes, there are even wires under the steering wheel or under the dashboard of the car. By yanking on as many of these as he or she can, your child might disable something that makes the car start, the turn signals or lights.

If at all possible, have the child turn on the headlights in the daytime. There is a chance this could cause the battery to run down and involve service personnel. Teach the child how to operate headlight switches in various vehicles.

#### **Toss the Keys**

Even if the keys are in the car and the driver is in the next seat, your child can try to remove the keys to throw them out the window. Teach your child that if he or she manages to get out of the car with the keys to not keep them. Throw the keys far away, in some bushes where the driver will have to hunt for them or in a big dumpster so he or she will have to dig through the trash to get them back. Tell your child to then run and scream!

Disabling a kidnapper's car serves several purposes. It draws attention to the vehicle, it possibly causes service personnel to get involved, and it can put the abductor with the child on foot. In short, disabling the car changes the abductor's game plan and increases the odds in the child's favor.

-- Bob Stuber