

OPINION: Options for runaways



It's important to know who else is in your child's life.

There is a lack of urgency and fear given to the word 'runaway' that is always given to the word "abduction." Perhaps it's the misconception that a minor is in complete control of their situation. Maybe in some cases they are, but typically only for a short while. Minors leave their home for various reasons. Some would seem justifiable as a percentage of runaways report fleeing abusive situations. Taking their lives into their own hands and running, for them, is just what they feel is the only option they have.

This isn't true.

It is important that if you know of a teenager or child in an abusive household that *you* get them help. They may not know how to do it themselves. If you turn your back on abuse, then you are taking sides with an abuser and they are now your victim as well. If you know of a child being abused or neglected you can report it by going to your local police station, Department of Child & Family or by calling the Child-

At-Risk Hotline at 1-800-792-5200.



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Being silent about abuse is not a burden you want to carry.

There is also a great number of minors who run away that are actually lured away. With technology we have allowed a playground for predators to enter into our child's lives without our knowledge.

It's important for children to be taught stranger safety and for teens who are going online to understand how someone they meet on there can very much be a fictional character with a live action dialogue. They study today's kids/teenagers as if they are studying for a test. They will know their music, movies, video games and how they talk. They have nothing but compliments to give and agree with everything your child says. When you haven't experienced the world as they haven't, you are naive to it.

We forget how impulsive and foolish we all once were. The generation that are parents to teens now, did not have the access to the world like their children do. We are learning

but they are succeeding past our knowledge. A targeted teen may even be taught by the predator how to erase their tracks. Clear the history on their computers and phones. If there is something for your child to act guilty about there is something for you to be worried about. There should be no secrets that leave room for danger to sneak in between you and your teenager. It's important to know who else is in your child's life. It's important for them to know that if a person wants to be kept a secret than they have ulterior motives. It's not because they agree with your child and mom and dad "are nosy jerks," it's because mom and dad have been around long enough to see the devil behind a smiling Facebook picture.



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home.*

The enemy we know. It's hard to pick your child's friends and you can't shadow them at school or maybe other activities they're involved in. They WILL know people you do not. Those people will know them. Details about your family that you may have not wanted to share. Details about your teenager that they shouldn't have shared. They could be the type of person, maybe even teenager, that you would not want around your own. There can be something alluring about the bad element.

Something that children who have everything going for them will throw it away, unwittingly for.

We can blame movies and television for baiting our children into thinking this is how the world works. We can blame negativity influences but we have to understand that it's on the parents just as much. We have to know our children, be their parent not their friend and realize that they are more important than ourselves.

If a situation has gotten out of our control we have to ask for help. Turn to the school, to their doctors, to trained professionals with resources. They have to know they matter that much to us. It's an incredible and important lesson to teach your child that it's okay to go for help when you need it.

Teenagers want to feel love and acceptance. Sometimes despite our best effort they are not feeling that at home. They deal with the pressures we have forgotten and the needs we grew out of. They are not mature enough to control or understand them. It took us years and it's the same for them. We didn't believe it when our parents told us and they won't believe it when their parents tell them. But while they are going through this pivotal moment of their lives they can fall victim to others who are waiting in what was once the shadows but now the bright screens of computers, tablets and cellphones.

There are currently 60 records listed from Massachusetts of missing children. Some would now be older than you who is reading this now. They disappeared as a child and were never found. One has the name John Doe, a recovered body of a child that couldn't even be buried with his name. Nobody knows who is or rather who he was.



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We know that a child that has been abducted is in danger. What we forget is that a minor on their own is also in danger. Children and teenagers need the guidance of an intelligent and responsible much less loving adult (a legal guardian) until they become an adult themselves. If you disagree with that than you must be a teenager who knows everything. Who also believed in Santa Claus and the tooth fairy not too long ago. Who thought their first crush was the best until they met their second. Who doesn't have the understanding of expenses much less money management. But does know that you'd prefer a five dollar bill over four quarters. You've grown up and learned a great deal of things but you have a great deal more to learn.

Every emotion, everything you feel is magnified because you are so young. Anger can become rage so easily and like really feels as if it's love. But I promise you that in a few months, a year or a few years things change so tremendously for you. Stay in school and focus on who you want to be. You will never get these years back so don't let you or someone else take them away.

When we say children are our future it's because we know how important children are. We not only want you to succeed in life but need you to.

You are all that important.

