

# Concilium Kids

Building Safety and Security into  
Your Family Team



Conciliuminc



Conciliumonline



[www.concilium.us](http://www.concilium.us)



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## 1. By the Numbers

What every kid should know by age.

### Ages 4 and Under

**Their First and Last Name.** This is one of the first things authorities will ask your child if they are separated from you or lost.

**YOUR First and Last Name.** If your child only knows you as "Mommy" or "Daddy," responders won't get very far.

**Permissions.** Kids must understand that they do not go anywhere with, accept anything from, or get into a car with anyone without your permission—period.

### By Ages 5-7 Years

**Phone Numbers.** Your children should know your mobile phone number. That way your child, or a first responder, can reach out to you.

**Safe List.** By age five, kids talk—a lot. Instead of saying, "don't talk to strangers," list three or so people who are always okay for your child to talk to.

**Friend vs Family.** A lot of expats teach their kids to call adult colleagues or team members "Uncle" or "Aunt." This is ok, but be sure to standardize verbiage. Be careful with calling friends or others outside the org or immediate trusted circle by similar references.

### By Ages 8 and Over

**Assembly Points.** Include where to meet if there is a fire, location of the saferoom, what to do if separated at a market, or other times the situation dictates. Remember to make assembly points both specific and easy to find.

**Buddy System.** Teaching kids the buddy system is important. Kids over 8 need to understand they have the responsibility and duty to watch out for each other—especially younger siblings. Remember the principle of "safety in numbers."

**Learn Feelings and Intuition.** Don't teach kids to merely be 'wary' of strangers. Instead, teach them to pay attention to how they feel when they are with someone. Kids know when someone makes them feel uncomfortable. If someone makes your child feel uncomfortable, they need to feel they have permission to get away from that person.

**Be Empowered.** By age 8 (or earlier...) kids should have both permission and feel empowered to yell, scream, bite, kick, spit, punch, urinate and defecate if necessary to protect themselves or make themselves a less attractive target to those who would hurt them.



*An object lesson with my kids about respect and cooperation in Uganda near the South Sudan border.  
Ages 9, 13, and 16.*



## 2. Be Prepared

Be prepared by getting prepared.

### Create A Toolkit

There are many tools and resources out there for parents to protect their kids. Concilium has free resources on how to build a family identity kit (PII Kit), as well as other important resources available on our website at: [www.concilium.us/resources](http://www.concilium.us/resources). That said, I recommend you consider the following before you travel:



⇒ **Make A Copy of Child's Passport Page.** In color, clear, and protected. Save a digital copy as well.

⇒ **Collect Recent Photos.** A photo of your child should:

- Show the child's full face in color
- Keep pictures in a digital format and able to be quickly accessed at all times
- Capture the way the child really looks

⇒ **Create A Full Description.** Besides their name, the description should include:

- |                 |                    |   |
|-----------------|--------------------|---|
| • Date of Birth | • Height           | • Glasses/Braces                                      |
| • Sex           | • Weight           | • Nickname  |
| • Eye Color     | • Hair color/style | • Identifying marks (scars, piercings, tattoos, etc.) |

⇒ **Collect Metadata.** Include:

- |                |  |
|----------------|--|
| • Fingerprints | • Dental X-rays and/or charting and bite impressions |
| • DNA          | • Allergies and other medical concerns               |

### Consider Monitoring

Parents worry about their kids, and that worry does not end when the kids grow from small children to teenagers. There are a number of child-friendly GPS trackers for body and for phones on the market that work well. Do your research and choose wisely.

### Develop, Train, and Debrief Immediate Action Drills.

Kids are resilient and, for the most part, pretty smart (but don't confuse smart with wise...). When it comes to threats, consider training kids in immediate actions drills such as:

- |                                |                               |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • Fire Drill                   | • Separated from Parent Drill |
| • Home Invasion Drill          | • Vehicle Accident            |
| • Severe Weather Drill         | • Dealing With Threat         |
| • Anti-Kidnapping/Snatch Drill | • First Aid                   |



## 3. Contingency Planning

Plan ahead to stay ahead.

### Aim Small, Miss Small

From flooding in the Balkans to terrorist attacks in France, to radiological incidents in Japan, being prepared to protect children during critical incidents is important. Having basic supplies and a simple plan can help families on mission better handle emergencies—from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.

Contingency planning with children can be hard. Children are often more susceptible to disasters than adults; falls and accidents often lead to hospital visits and even evacuation from the mission field. Being prepared to address, respond, and bounce back from these events is important.

Children also face mental and emotional trauma like their parents. Whether they directly faced a threat or glean post incident anxiety from their parent's traumatic experiences, children can suffer post-traumatic stress just like adults.

This section offers some basic tips for contingency planning with children from infancy to the teenage years. I hope it helps you to "aim small; miss small." That is to say, a little prior planning and preparation should go a long way toward developing grit (steadfastness) and establishing resiliency (the ability to bounce back after a critical incident).



### Contingency Planning with Infants

In an emergency, one of the best ways to feed a nursing infant is breastfeeding. The *International Journal of Breastfeeding* even states "Exclusive breastfeeding could be considered an emergency preparedness activity." That said, be careful relying on breastmilk alone. Both stress and trauma may affect a mother's milk supply, causing lactating mothers to dry up. Also, if mom is injured, it could leave a baby without a supply of food. Having a small supply of formula and bottles on hand may be important in an emergency. I recommend keeping a small number of single-serving packages of infant formula on hand.

### Contingency Planning with Toddlers and Small Children

I learned the hard way that contingency planning for toddlers and small children is a challenge. Infants can be kept still for long periods of time while toddlers and smaller children are ALWAYS moving. My first experience with this came after my 18 month old was scalded on his hand in Morocco by a bidet (ask his mom...). Keeping him still and clean while bandaged was impossible! Here are some ideas based on our experiences:

**Food.** Parents are the worst at empowering kids to become picky eaters. The reality is small children can eat the same foods that you do. They may not like it, but when they get hungry enough, they WILL eat. That said, be prepared for some accommodation with your food rations if you have a bug out bag or an emergency home kit.

**Clothing.** Kids are always on the move and getting MESSY. This is true on a good day. For toddlers and small children, you will need more changes of clothes than you would for infants. If you have to evacuate, pack one or two more changes of clothes for young children than you would for yourself. Layers are your friend. Look for clothing that can be easily layered and add warmth in the cold and reduced in warmer weather.

**Training.** Part of the "aim small; miss small" principle is training. This is perhaps the most important part of contingency planning with small children. Children already practice contingency planning in school with fire drills and severe weather drills. While you don't want to traumatize your kids, helping them to understand what to do in an emergency is important. Starting off small is always a good idea.

## Contingency Planning with Older Kids and Tweens

As kids get older, parents should put their children onto a trajectory of self-reliance. The reality is, however, that kids mature at different rates. With this in mind, the older a child gets, the more responsibility they should be given on the family team. I think it is good to remember that this responsibility and self-reliance is not only about contingency planning. It also communicates key principles of discipleship and biblical adulthood. A kid who is a good team member is also a good ministry partner.



**Outbound Contingency Planning.** Depending on the family, kids spend 30-50 hours per week in school, sports, and church activities. That means there is a good chance they will not be at home if there is an emergency. Many school systems in the USA are poorly equipped for emergencies. The same is true overseas. Therefore, it is up to parents to ensure their kids have what they need to be safe, communicate, and get home.

**School Preparation.** What are the school's emergency policies? Under what situations will students be evacuated from the premises in an emergency? Where will they go?

**Establish Communication Protocols with Schools.** Include not only the main line to the school but also the teacher's mobile numbers. Also included here are your kid's mobile numbers as well.

**Contingency Plans.** It is always best to establish contingency plans BEFORE they are needed. Include rally points, meeting points, and actions to take if contact cannot be made between parents and kids. Contingency plans are critical here. Whether it is getting separated or lost, an abduction attempt, or an attack on a mall, market, or other venue, what is the plan to get to safety, maintain accountability, and call for help?

**Provide Tangible Responsibilities for Kids On the Family Ministry Team.** Kids as team members means kids must not only be given significant tasks on the family and ministry team, but they must also be expected to perform well as a member of that team. When the family travels, give kids responsibilities for "watching out" for the team. Give older kids with age and maturity appropriate responsibilities to include caring for younger kids. All of this builds competence and confidence.

## Contingency Planning with Teens

By the time kids are in their teens, they should be a near fully functioning member of your family and ministry team. Whether it be caring for younger siblings, mastery of language and culture, or traveling alone or in small groups, the trajectory you set with younger children will begin to pay off as teenagers.

I have found that there is no better way to teach contingency planning than by doing. Let your teens take a first aid course. Take them on a multi-day backpacking trip. Give them opportunities for collaboration and challenge that forces them to cooperate and negotiate with others.

Remember that your children are still children! They need to be challenged to grow both physically and emotionally. Contingency planning is a good way to help them develop that maturity over time. Contingency planning isn't just about survival; it is about self-reliance and accountability. Teach them (and give them) opportunities to make their own decisions AND fail. Let them learn from their mistakes. That way you can teach your children to think critically to solve problems. Remember: If you can instill this mentality into your children when they are young, they will be better equipped and prepared to process and grow through any situation life throws at them!





## 4. Confidence and Resilience

Set your trajectory toward success.

I am often asked: “how do you teach kids to be resilient?” Well, that is a loaded question, and one I am always learning new ways to answer.

What I do know is that basic skills and mental functioning are critical not only to survival, but also to success in today’s world. Teaching kids to be strong and brave seems to be a lost art for many. Remember: competence leads to confidence! Here are just a couple of thoughts on building mental functioning in kids from my experiences training youth to become well equipped biblical adults.

### Begin with the Shema:

The Shema, found in Deuteronomy 6:4-9, gives us some great insight on both WHAT and HOW area re to train our kids. It says:

*“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”*

**1. Begin with your own heart.** If you are going to teach confidence and courage, you teach it best by having and doing it yourself. Reflect on your own heart and soul and set your might to improving yourself as unto the Lord.

**2. Be intentional.** The Bible tells us to “teach these principles diligently.” This means we have to do this well, with intent, and with expectation. This is not just another Sunday School lesson; this is our kids’ futures we are talking about. Take seriously what you are teaching your kids. Remember they are arrows in your quiver. One way or another you are launching them out sooner than you may like. Remember that you are building trajectory into their lives—and that is exactly what this process and responsibility is about: trajectory. You set your children’s trajectory, but it is up to them to hit the mark.

**3. Instill convictions both formally and informally.** We are told to “talk of them when we sit in our house, when we walk by the way, and when we lay down and when we rise.” This means we are not only to formally teach the principles but to live them around our kids. We must nourish confidence within our children. If we want our children to be brave, then we have to be brave ourselves. If we want them to live with character, then we must do so first. While we certainly are not perfect, we must strive to demonstrate how to fail well. But that is certainly not the end. They should also see how we recover from our mistakes and failures for



*My daughter being held hostage as a student during Concilium's 3.5 day CAST-FSC. Age 12.*



*My son as a first responder to a multiple vehicle accident using his first aid training to stop bleeding from a head wound of a victim.*

*Age 13.*

that is the heart of resilience.

**4. Build confidence and conviction.** We are told to “bind them to our hand.” We are to demonstrate and live this kind of character every day. Help them know their core identity and WORTH is in Christ; not in their performance or what others say about them. Self-worth will always be stronger and more powerful than self-esteem, for one seeks value from within (self-esteem) and is only as strong as the value a person places on themself (and that is a very dangerous place to be).

Self-worth seeks value from outside of self, developing extrinsic worth. Therefore, teach your kids that significance and worth are given by the One who establishes our value. Equipped with that understanding, let your kids draw confidence from their convictions because those convictions (and identity) come from Someone bigger than themselves (note the capitalization of “Someone” is intended here...).

**5. Remember that competence builds confidence.** Kids love learning skills. What most kids struggle with is developing the discipline required to master them. Whether it is playing an instrument or learning wilderness survival skills, remember that competence builds confidence.

I have found that most young kids love learning survival skills. My own kids learned to build campfires and survive in the woods at a young age. I also have taught them to read a map, use a GPS, perform first aid, what to do if lost, and even when and how to fight back if attacked. To be clear, I am not expecting my children to have to fight someone and hope they have learned how to never get lost! Survival training isn’t just about learning how to do X, Y, and Z in the wilderness. It is about developing resilience, confidence, and strong mental functioning as kids develop self-reliance and accountability.

Even if you can’t get your kids into the wilderness you can still teach them to be resilient and develop confidence using the Shema as a guide. Tie their personal faith to personal resilience by teaching them to trust in the Lord AND do good (Psalm 37:3). This means not only teaching them how to make good decisions, but to allow them to make their own decisions—and to learn from their mistakes. Teach them to think critically and place on them an expectation that they MUST think critically in order to solve problems.

As I said earlier: “If you can instill this mentality into your children when they are young, they will be better equipped and prepared to process and grow through any situation life throws at them!”



*First aid training for all my kids, ages 7, 11, and 13.*



*Survival training with the sons, ages 8 and 14.*



*My youngest demonstrating how to defeat restraints during a team building exercise at a Christian men’s retreat. Age 9.*





## Free Resources

Get started today!

**Concilium ISOPREP Form.** A resource to collect key data and store it in one place.

<https://concilium.us/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Concilium-ISOPREP-Form.pdf>

**How to Build a PII Kit.** A PII or identity kit to gather information preemptively that can help ID a missing family member.

<https://concilium.us/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/How-to-Build-a-PII-Kit.pdf>

**Bug Out Bag Primer.** Basic Understanding of bug out bags and hibernation principles.

<https://concilium.us/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Bug-Out-Bag-Primer.pdf>

**Survival Kit Primer.** Basic gear to form a basic camping and bush survival kit.

<https://concilium.us/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Survival-Kit-Primer.pdf>

**Individual Stay-GO Assessment.** A tool to help field assess personal stay-go decisions.

<https://concilium.us/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Individual-Stay-Go-Assessment-07-2021.pdf>

**Thresholds for Departure; Benchmarks for Return.** 21 benchmarks for stay-go decisions.

<https://concilium.us/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Thresholds-for-Departure-Benchmarks-for-Return-12-2021.pdf>

**Risk Appetite, Risk Tolerance, and the Sacred Work.** Objective faith is critical to missions!

<https://concilium.us/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Risk-Tolerance-Risk-Capacity-and-the-Sacred-Work-of-the-Kingdom-Security-Professional-1.pdf>

**Even More Resources.** Visit Concilium's Resources Page for More Great Resources and Tools!

<https://concilium.us/resources/>

### About the Author

Scott Brawner is the President/CEO of Concilium, a global nonprofit ministry providing security-risk and crisis management services to missionaries and persecuted Christians around the world, and the Executive Director of the Risk Management Network, a network of security professionals serving in Great Commission organizations.

Scott is a former Army Ranger and seminary-trained security practitioner who combines sound theological perspective with security best practices for churches, mission agencies, and Christian humanitarian organizations.

Scott lives in the Midwest with his wife and three children.

