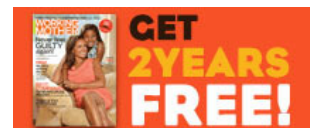


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FAMILY FOCUS - Tips to Keep Tabs on Your Kids

Options to ease your mind and keep them safe



By: Melissa Taylor

"I lost Gabe today!" my girlfriend wrote on Facebook. "Daycare said the bus didn't come. But the school said he got on the bus. No one knew where he was and I couldn't breathe. Plus, if he's found, I can't guarantee he would tell them his real name. He might be Thomas from the Island of Sodor!"

Holy heart attack, Batman! It's our biggest fear as a parent – the absolute worst goes through your mind – and soon, horrible, self-loathing thoughts speed through your brain. *IF only I didn't work. IF I could just watch him all the time. This is all my fault . . . IF, IF, IF . . .*

Long story, short... Gabe was never lost; the communication was. But, Olivia's crisis begs the question – how do you "tag" a child so if lost, his important information can be found – and in Gabe's case, he's autistic which, in his case, means that no matter what his age, he might not communicate his name and phone number to a stranger, even a helpful one.

Here are some simple suggestions to keep your child tagged for travel.

1. Label Their Clothes

Sonja Davis says, "We got bracelets for our kids, but they loved them too much and kept taking them off. We settled on name, address and phone number on the back **OUTSIDE** of their shirts. It won't show in the front, it is more visible than an inside tag. Does ruin the clothes sort of for hand me downs or ARC donations, but ultimately their safety was most important. You can also do this with shoes. <http://www.mabel.ca/>

2. Use Temporary Safety Tattoos

SafetyTat makes a product that is a personalized temporary tattoos that includes your phone number right in the design (\$20 for 30; safetytat.com).

3. Emergency Cell Phone

If the phone is on, the police should be able to track the signal in emergencies.

4. I.D. Necklace or Bracelet

Wrist Band and Snow makes rubber bracelets like the popular Live Strong ones which can be customized to say anything – a phone number and name would work.

5. Shoe Tag

Olivia likes this option best since Gabe wouldn't like a clothes tag or want to wear a bracelet.

<http://www.whosshoesid.com/>

6. GPS Personal Tracking Device

I didn't know these existed, did you? – <http://www.brickhousesecurity.com/child-locators-personal-gps-tracking-device.html>

Obviously you can't physically watch your child 100% of the time – I tried when my daughter was born. Impossible. But, tagging your child brings peace of mind. So does reviewing your safety rules **OFTEN** – not just once a year.

In particular, make sure you review your rules every time you go somewhere new. If you're at a theme park, the zoo, or a busy park, discuss what to do if you get separated.

In the book, *Protecting the Gift*, author Gavin de Becker suggests that your child **ONLY** ask a woman for help – not a policeman or anyone else. Add that to your rules, it makes sense to me.

Olivia gets high marks for not having a heart attack while her son might have been lost. We won't forget her story anytime soon, just glad it had a happy ending.

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