

## Situational Awareness – Increasing Children’s Observational Skills

Today's world is busy; people are rushing here and there to get to work, school, the store, or the next activity. Even our “leisure” time is filled with busyness. And during all of it, we are distracted by our devices. This not only leads to us missing important moments in our lives, but it also creates a higher likelihood that we would become the victim of a crime or, at very best, be unable to help someone near us that was. Therefore, it is essential to teach children to be perceptive and educate them on situational awareness skills to improve their safety.

Nowadays, not only are children distracted as they play and talk with their friends when they are out, but they are also looking down at their phones or other devices. When they are alone, they are often using headphones as well. These behaviors set them up for dangerous situations because they are entirely unaware of what is going on in the environment around them. Research indicates that offenders look for these behaviors when choosing their victims. These things, along with a lack of confidence and directionless movement, add to the probability of becoming a target, so parents must be vigilant in teaching their children essential awareness tactics.

Younger children, especially, are instinctively observant and inquisitive; this is how they learn. Using these natural qualities to help them become more aware of their surroundings can be advantageous. Encouraging children to use all their senses and be on the lookout for things outside the norm in a specific environment will increase their instincts. Using games such as “I Spy” and “Guess Who?” children’s descriptive vocabulary will be enhanced, and their brains will be trained to observe details. These things, in addition to remembering details such as what entrance they came in and where the car was parked, will keep their brain active throughout the visit.

And while remembering details is a vital piece of situational awareness, children also need to be confident as they navigate through any location. In the **SKILLZ** program, children are trained in a way that maximizes their physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development.

By participating in this **age-specific** training, children become more confident in their abilities and have more control. Their minds are sharp as instructors utilize **neurobics** to increase the brain's connections, which keeps them from "zoning out."

As children grow and develop autonomy, **parents** must arm them with important tools for personal safety. And while we do not want to cause paranoia, we must teach them to be on the lookout for odd behaviors and to constantly reevaluate their surroundings. By building their instincts, children can minimize their chances of being a victim, can warn others of possible danger, and help give details information of any situation that arises. Children then become confident when navigating through any environment and can **manage** themselves in any situation.