

All our children need a fighting chance

My 10-year-old daughter was measured for a taekwondo uniform last week.

Why? Because after reading story after story of women and children being sexually abused in the past few months, I can no longer ignore the fact that it is time to empower her physically to defend herself in case anyone ever tries to harm her.

I realize that knowing a martial art is no guarantee that she will be able to overcome an attacker, but I have also come to understand that life is not a fairy tale. Seldom does a prince come to rescue a damsel in distress. Rather, as we saw in Cleveland this month, the damsels must take responsibility for saving themselves.

Indeed, teaching our children safety and empowerment begins at a young age by giving them knowledge and confidence.

First, we teach them love. We show them kind words and gentle touches, the core of human interaction. Then, we teach them their names and their families. "This is Amanda Berry" were four of the most important words spoken



Warren Binford
GUEST OPINION

May 6. From the moment she first spoke, this powerful young woman reminded us that an enduring sense of identity can ultimately mean survival even in the most horrific conditions.

As our babies grow into toddlers and preschoolers, we teach them how and when to dial 911. We teach them our names, addresses and telephone numbers. We teach them the parts of their bodies that are private and who can touch them there and when. Just in case, we teach them the importance of not keeping secrets. We teach them that hands and words are for love and to avoid people who are hurtful. We teach our children that there are good people and bad people, helpers and hurters.

As they grow older, we teach them the nuances of the world and the people around us. We teach them that good people sometimes do bad things and

bad things sometimes happen to good people. We teach them that although the world is full of helpers, sometimes people who appear to be helpers are not what they seem and our sons and daughters must rely on their wisdom and intuition to know the difference.

As our children begin to approach adolescence and seek more autonomy and independence, we struggle with our fear and desire to keep them at home safe in our care. But we also know that there are summer camps, slumber parties, prom dates and, eventually, college waiting for them. We know that holding our children back from these cultural rites of passage could stunt their emotional and social growth.

How then do we let them out of our sight in a world filled with people like Ariel Castro, members of the Steubenville High School football team, and the numerous rapists whose attacks in New Delhi and Tahrir Square have generated worldwide media attention in recent months?

First, we must never forget to recognize that our world and the people in it are largely brilliant and beautiful and

wondrous. All of our children, regardless of gender, should be given the opportunity to explore, discover and experience life fully. At the same time, we must never forget that living fully and passionately sometimes exposes us and the people we love to danger. Thus, we must talk to our children about our world's dangers and empower them to overcome challenges when they are unable to avoid them.

We were reminded this month that the ability to kick in a door can lead to the freedom of four captive young women and girls. Regardless of what side of the door my daughter is on, I want to make sure that she knows how to throw that kick. Even better, I want to ensure that she can throw a well-placed kick even earlier if she ever needs to.

When confronted with evil, all of our children deserve a fighting chance.

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