

# Reaching Out:



“It takes a village to raise a child” is a well-known adage but it is so much more than that, it is the absolute truth. It takes a community to protect our children and the opposite also holds true, it takes a community to allow children to be abused. We can no longer ignore the horrible reality that child abuse exists within our frum community and our existing methods are failing to deal with this tragedy.

Enter Magenu. Magenu is an organization whose mission statement is that all children have the right to investigate and navigate this world without worrying about their personal safety. We are promoting the education of children in a tzinuz fashion. One of our initial programs is to bring “Safety Kid®” created by Aleinu into all of our Brooklyn schools. The Safety Kid® methodology is founded on the following principles: Education provides knowledge. Knowledge provides skills. Skills empower. Empowerment helps to make safe and right choices. Safe and right choices promote prevention. It also states that in order to have effective children’s safety we need to include children as well as adults in prevention models. Safety Kid® is a program that not only teaches children about personal safety but also puts emphasis on educating the significant adults in a child’s world. This proven program has already been implemented in many schools across the country, including all of Queens and the Five Towns. Why should our children be less fortunate?

Some basics taught to children in Pre-K thru 4th grade include:

1. What to do and who to call in an emergency.
2. What to do if someone rings the doorbell and he or she is the only one available to answer.
3. What to do if another adult or child tries to touch him or her in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable.
4. What to do if he or she gets lost.
5. Who are safe helpers to turn to if needed.

In addition, we have administration and staff training that focuses on many different aspects including recognizing signs of abuse, good hiring practices and rules and regula-

tions to create a safe and secure environment for students and staff. We also have practical, easily understood information for parents so that they have the opportunity to learn how to deal with personal safety aspects of their family life.

Magenu believes that teaching children how to be safe needs to be done at home as well as in the school setting. Education in schools is an effective method for preventing children from getting into dangerous situations, falling prey to abuse or staying silent if it does occur. In addition, for a child, beyond family, school is the main setting where children have an opportunity to form close relationships with adults. It makes sense that a child who is in distress might turn to a Rebbi or a Morah at school whom they trust and respect. We cannot leave this solely up to the parents. Many parents avoid these conversations, are in the mind frame of only warning their kids about stranger danger or may even be the abusers. It needs to be in the schools. We cannot watch our children 24 hours a day. It is our job as parents, teachers, principals, aunts, uncles etc. to give our children the skills to protect themselves from harm and to give them the knowledge of how to get help if chas v shalom they have been violated.

Saying ‘no’ to an adult under the best of circumstances is extremely difficult for a child, add to that the fact that 90% of abusers are known and trusted by the child and saying ‘no’ seems an impossible feat. We need to give this skill to our children. We do this in a way that does not promote distrust or frightens the child but instead empowers them to become aware and assertive about their safety.

Magenu believes that it is time for a change. The crisis in our community has reached a boiling point where it needs to be addressed. We are doing just that. Everyone must be aware of the dangers and the long-term consequences of every form of abuse. To continue doing nothing and to ignore or minimize the crimes perpetrated against our children would be the greatest sin of all.

Magenu is a new organization and like all new ventures we need community support. We are looking for this in the form of communication. We need people to start talking amongst each other and to start asking their children’s schools if they are a Magenu school. Parents have the right to request that the safety program come to their schools. In fact Magenu believes they don’t just have the right to ask, but that they have an obligation to their children to make every school a kid safe school. Isn’t that something all parents and children deserve?

*For more information go to [Magenu.org](http://Magenu.org) or you can email: [Shani.V@Magenu.org](mailto:Shani.V@Magenu.org).*