

MONKEY BUSINESS

by Sally Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

Have you seen the little monkey backpacks that toddlers sometimes wear that double as a child safety leash? When my children were small we had little harnesses that went over their shoulders and buckled around their chest. The leash clipped on the back and it allowed our kids to be semi-independent while still being kept close to us. Those harnesses really were a Godsend for safety as far as I was concerned, and I still think so.

I have heard a number of negative comments about child leashes - such as 'we are treating our children like dogs by putting them on a leash'. I really don't get it. My 2 year-old grandson runs like greased lightning. He can be standing next to me one second and gone the next...taking off at a fast sprint with me in hot pursuit, barely able to catch him. Yet my children do not use a leash to keep this little rascal beside them. Instead they have to keep watching him like a hawk and be on the ready the minute he makes a run for it. I am convinced that it is the pressure of what others think that is stopping young parents from the ideal way of keeping their children close to them at all times in crowded places or near the road. If we strap children into strollers and into highchairs, what is the difference between keeping them from slipping out of a seat and keeping them from running away from you? Are we going to be pressured into removing stroller and highchair harnesses as well?

On a practical note. It makes shopping so much simpler, (especially when you have one child in a stroller and one running along beside you), when you can keep your child restrained instead of him climbing through the racks of clothes and getting lost. I have seen plenty of toddlers running around in clothing stores, creating a hazard for other shoppers. Children have been snatched in the twinkling of an eye in broad daylight when they are out of sight of their caregiver?

I have a very good friend who periodically takes her dog in the car with her. She doesn't put a safety harness on to secure it in the back seat. The dog just bounces around free. It freaks me out and I refuse to go with her in the car under these circumstances. In fact, I have seen many dogs with their heads hanging out the driver's window of the car while the car is moving. How absolutely dangerous is that? Adults and children are required to wear safety belts when a car is moving. There are very specific requirements for child car seats and belts to keep children safe in a car. I wish there was a similar law for securing animals in vehicles. In the case of a sudden stop, unsecured animals and other objects can become deadly flying missiles in a car. If we love our pets we should keep them restrained for the safety of both them and other passengers.

One of our main responsibilities in life, as parents, is to keep our children

safe from harm. How can it be inhumane to want to ensure that your child cannot run away from you when you are near a road or in a busy mall? How can a leash be a bad thing? Don't bow to the silly notions of a few. Make sure your children are safe at all times, whatever it takes.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.