

## **Your Personal Coach**

Kathleen Brehony, Ph.D.

I can't help but grieve about some of the ways the world has changed since I was a child. As overprotective as she was, my mother would allow me to play with neighborhood friends about a quarter-mile from our house. She'd pack little lunch boxes and some Kool-Aid for my brother and me and we'd scoot down a trail through woods until we arrived at the edge of a small creek. For hours – and in the summer until it was almost dark – my friends and I would imagine that we were early settlers building forts from sticks and logs. We came back dirty and grubby, but it never occurred to us – or my parents -- that we wouldn't return home or that we would be assaulted in any way in our play area. I grieve for the kids who can't play like that today and they can't. Because no mother in her right mind would allow her young children to be out of her sight and gone all day, through the woods, and back only at dusk. In today's world of Amber Alerts and missing children, my sweet and loving mother would have been considered to be neglectful. Today's woods are dangerous. But danger doesn't only lurk in the woods. It's in our kid's bedrooms, our living rooms, dens, and any other location with access to the dark corners of cyberspace.

Last week, Department of Homeland Security Deputy Press Secretary Brian J. Doyle was arrested on charges of using his computer to seduce a child after he allegedly struck up sexually-explicit conversations with a detective posing as a 14-year-old girl. And he's not the only one. In mid-March, an FBI sting operation – called operation Candyman – netted forty upstanding citizens in twenty states including two Catholic priests, youth baseball coaches, a civilian law enforcement employee, and a teacher's aide. They were trading hard-core images of children -- some as young as six months. At least twenty-seven of the suspects have admitted previous acts of child molestation involving more than thirty-six children. Internet pornography – especially involving the degradation and exploitation of children -- is a disgusting yet flourishing business. Sexual abuse and rape is rampant.

Did you know that, in America, one in every four women and one in seven men are victims of sexual assault before the age of eighteen? Experts consider these to be underreported crimes and, in fact, some research suggests that less than one-half of all rapes and sexual assaults are ever reported to the police. Think about those staggering statistics the next time you are at a meeting or with a group of friends.

While some rapes are committed by strangers, almost two-thirds are committed by someone who is known to the victim and almost half are friends or acquaintances. The frightening reality is that, in America, every two and a half minutes someone is raped or sexually assaulted.

April is Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month. But it is a critical and frightening reality that we must be aware of throughout the year not only for our own protection but also in order to create a safer community. To learn more about what you can do to prevent sexual assault and rape, go to: [www.nccasa.org](http://www.nccasa.org) (North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault) or [www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org) (Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network).

In Dare County, we are fortunate to have the compassionate care of Outer Banks Hotline, our crisis intervention and prevention center. These are the people who offer shelter, care, and healing for victims of sexual abuse and domestic violence. These are the folks who race to the hospital in the middle of the night to help stunned and suffering victims. Hotline deserves our gratitude and support. Throughout the month of April, you are invited to raise consciousness and money by hosting a Dining with Friends event. This is an awareness booster and fund-raiser that can be as simple or as elaborate as you choose. Hotline will provide a terrific planning packet about how to organize your event for maximum impact. Call 473-5121.

And after you've had a gracious plenty to eat and raised money for a good cause, learn to protect yourself. Hotline board Member Kym Rock, along with four of her trained staff, is offering a unique and powerful training program for women: Fight Like a Girl, a program that turns instinctive responses into effective self-defense. The training will be held May 2 from 7-9 PM at the Clarion Hotel in Kill Devil Hills (on the Beach Road). Call the Hotline Office in Manteo 473-5121 or register at [kym@kymrock.com](mailto:kym@kymrock.com). Registration is free, but space is limited.

The great anthropologist Margaret Mead once said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." If we all work together to create a better world, there's a chance that tomorrow's children will be able to play in the woods – like my brother and I did -- and return home...safe and sound.

Send your personal coaching questions to [kathleen@fullpotentialliving.com](mailto:kathleen@fullpotentialliving.com) or call 473-4004. Kathleen is a personal and executive coach, clinical psychologist, and writer. (©2006 Kathleen Brehony. All Rights Reserved.) [www.fullpotentialliving.com](http://www.fullpotentialliving.com)