



16

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Running Away

How Not to Solve Problems

In 1999, there were over 1.5 million children who ran away from home. Over seventy percent of these were exposed to potentially harmful experiences (like drug use, physical abuse, etc.), during their runaway episode.¹ That is a lot of children!

How many times in the heat of an argument, or in frustration of not getting their way do kids threaten and say, "I'm running away!"? Granted, many kids who say that in the moment don't follow through, but how can you help prevent a child from actually running away?

Make sure kids understand the allure of being on their own isn't grandiose, dramatic, or thrilling. Help them understand the dangers of "living on their own." According to U.S. Department of Justice research, one possible connection for the downturn in runaways is that kids are more aware of the dangers the "open road" has for them. Talk to kids (before they threaten to run away) about dangers they may encounter if they were on their own (no food to eat, no place to sleep, people "out there" who want to hurt them, etc.).²

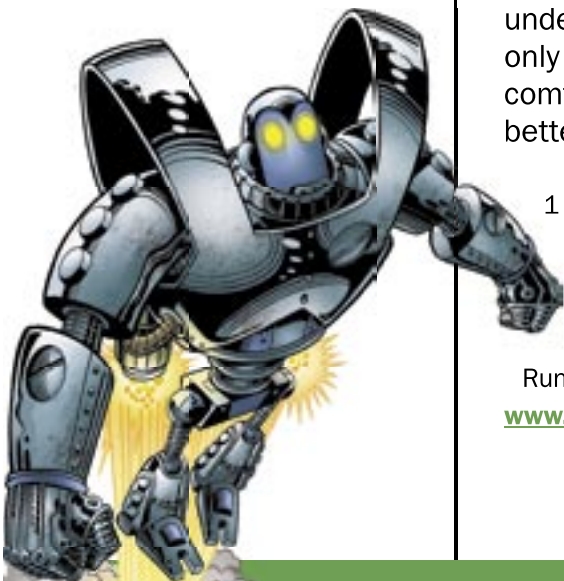
Kids run away from home for a variety of reasons. Help children understand that running away from home doesn't solve problems; it only makes them worse. Create a safe environment where kids feel comfortable talking to you about their problems, and help them think of better ways to face the problem, rather than by running away from home.

1 National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children (NISMART). October 2002 newsletter.

www.ncjrs.gov/html/ojdp/nismart/05/index.html

2 National Estimates of Missing Children: Selected Trends, 1998-1999. National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children (NISMART). December 2004.

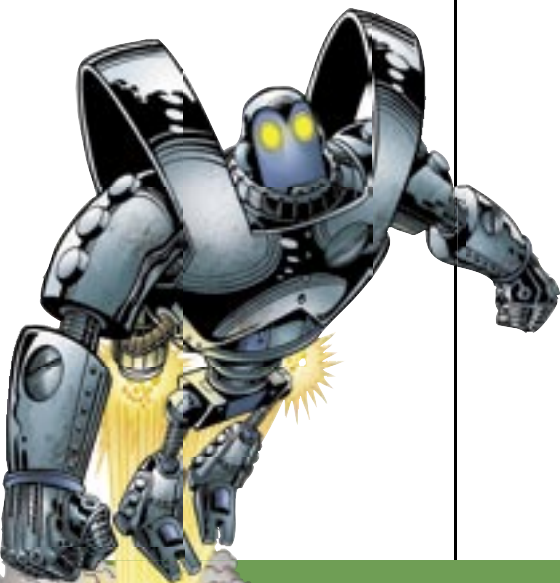
www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojdp/206179.pdf



Holsom Comics Discussion Questions

After kids have read [Welcome to Holsom, Issue 16](#), begin a discussion about running away by asking these questions:

1. Does Jorge and Mouse's adventure on the open road seem fun to you? Why or why not? *(Answers will vary.)*
2. Jorge and Mouse ran away because they panicked and felt they had no other choice. Was this their only choice? *(No.)* What could they have done besides running away with Rover? *(Sought out a trusted adult for help, etc.)*
3. Out on the open road, the boys find they are running away from more than just JD Raye and the townspeople of Holsom. What other adventures do they encounter? *(The Blue Wolf, Wendy and her family, they try to avoid the hunters, etc.)*
4. Mouse and Jorge go with Wendy back to her dad's museum. Should they have gone with her? Why or why not? *(No. Wendy's a stranger. What do they know about her? The boys were lucky that neither Wendy nor her father wanted to do them harm.)*
5. Do you think Jorge and Mouse are missed back in Holsom? Why or why not? *(Yes! They have Rover; the kids are worried about them; and their parents could be worried about them as well.)*



Activity

Discuss It!

1. Get kids talking about the dangers of the world beyond their neighborhood. Spend a few minutes discussing some things that wait for them if they choose to run away. (Keep it age appropriate! Answers may include people want to hurt them, no food, no place to sleep, drug encounters, etc.)
2. Ask kids why they think other kids choose to run away from home. (Angry at mom or dad, didn't get their way, did something they shouldn't and were afraid of the consequences, etc.)
3. Ask them if they've ever felt like running away from home. Why did they want to run away?
4. Spend time brainstorming things they should do instead. How can they handle a situation they'd rather run away from? (Apologize if necessary, talk to another trusted adult, etc.)

Help kids understand that running away doesn't solve anything. Often, it takes a bad situation and makes it worse. Help them know that no matter what they face in life, there are people around them who love them and want to see them stay safe.

