Introduction

It might be a good idea to talk about things you were allowed to do as a child without any parental supervision. To help you, here are some things I did as a child. And neither of my parents seemed overly concerned about any of them.

◦ Riding our bikes on the streets at all hours. No headgear.
◦ Learning to do wheelies on our bikes in the middle of the road.
◦ Going to other kids' houses without telling mum and dad.
◦ Going to the park and the forest.
◦ Going into Central London on my own.
◦ Playing with train sets and me and my brother doing repair jobs on the electric toy trains. No one got electrocuted!
◦ Being left alone in the house while mum went to the shops.
◦ Banging nails into walls to mount pictures.
◦ Going up into the attic to rummage around.
◦ And all the other things mentioned in the article below.

Tell your students about all the “dangerous” things you did as a child as an opener, then let one or two students read the article out loud in front of the class.

Reading

A mother of today complains:
I have so many things to worry about. The whole neighbourhood is not safe. There are strange men hanging around on street corners, in the park. All these freaks and weirdos. So I can’t let my son play outside on his own.

Ten years ago it was all computer games. Now everyone has a smartphone. My son also wants one but I am afraid of what things he will find online.

You see kids using them today and it is like they sap their attention.

And every time I turn on the news it seems there is a young child that has been abducted or lost an eye or caught some kind of disease.

It’s not like the old days.

My own mother tells me of a time when kids could play outside on their own. She said she went to the park, even a forest, and no one thought twice.

They didn’t have computers in every home and there were no weird chat rooms or things like Instagram.

I wish we could have days like that again...

All modern-day parents have the same concerns. And yet life is not that different. According to research, there is little chance of a child getting into any danger or hurting himself. But people still worry.

Probably because of all the media coverage they are exposed to 24-hours a day.

There is an ever-growing list of things that parents will not let their children do. Supervised or unsupervised.

Such as climbing trees, riding a bike without a helmet or knee-pads, going out in the evening, going anywhere without a phone, dropping by other kids homes without telling their parents.

But years ago, kids did all of these things and a lot worse. Few of them ran into trouble. There were few accidents.

Then something changed.

In the last twenty years, parents just stopped letting their kids... be kids.

And then there are all the reports of the negative effect this has on children today.

Children growing up with a sense of anxiety. The constant feeling that danger is ever lurking behind dark corners. Kids are also developing self-esteem issues.

And yet, if parents allowed their kids to climb trees, race their bikes on the street, run around in parks unsupervised, they would gain a lot of confidence. They would develop into capable adults.

But for today’s modern parents they have a strong feeling to protect their children from the world.

**Essential Vocabulary**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>hanging around</th>
<th>freaks</th>
<th>weirdos</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sap</td>
<td>abducted</td>
<td>chat rooms</td>
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<td>Instagram</td>
<td>media coverage</td>
<td>exposed to</td>
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<td>ever-growing</td>
<td>supervised</td>
<td>unsupervised</td>
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<td>helmet</td>
<td>knee-pads</td>
<td>to drop by</td>
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<td>to run into</td>
<td>anxiety</td>
<td>lurking</td>
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Questions

1. Are these parents’ concerns justified?
2. What do your parents worry about in terms of your safety?
3. Is the world becoming more of a dangerous place for kids? In what way?
4. What are the dangers?
5. What is acceptable for kids to do today?
6. What is unacceptable?
8. Whose job is it to teach/instruct kids about the dangers/risks in life?
9. What do you think about kids using social media? What risks are there of them using this?
10. “Let kids be kids” - How much do you agree/disagree with this statement?
12. What bad things did you do as a child?

Group Exercise

Now split the class into groups of three or four. Tell the student to imagine they are parents (or maybe they really are parents!) — ask them to think of a list of things they would not let their child do. And provide valid reasons why not. This is important! Go round and assist. Then present to the class.

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