



Tchessa

Earlier this year my daughter got a piece of glass in her foot and had to go to the ER to have it removed. She was asked no less than five times if she “felt safe at home.” When my son ran into a bedpost and split his forehead open, the admission paperwork had a box for “number of ER visits. Last month was Child Abuse Prevention month, and my fifth-grader came home with a quiz we were supposed to take together about conditions in our home. (We haven’t done it; don’t tell Social Services.)

The Mozambique version of this is the Holistic Evangelism Project’s drama team. They go into the villages and do songs and skits about everything from staying in school to HIV/AIDS prevention. Today’s skit was on child abuse since the audience was primarily children. Before and after the skits were dances and even a “monster” to get their attention. I learned that silliness is universal.



After the drama, we were driving to check on a well site, and we passed some children clearing brush by the side of the road. Sebber said they do that because when the grass is tall, it is easy for children to be snatched on their way to school. Fortunately, radio announcements and awareness campaigns have taught the children to walk in groups and avoid strangers with candy (technically “sweets and biscuits”) and so the incidence rate has gone down.

I thought about how similar this is to home. We don’t let our children walk to school alone; we warn them continuously about “stranger danger”; we talk to our children about abuse and their privacy and their control over their own bodies.

So what’s the difference? The difference is that when children in the Mozambique villages don’t have someone to walk with at school, and the grass is too high, they just don’t go to school. We drive our children, send them with carpools, or put them on the bus. We have options and options are power.

This is the beauty of what the Outreach Foundation does by supporting these projects. Through these skits and songs and lessons, we level the playing field because we teach adults and children that abuse is unacceptable. Through laughter and silliness, and then serious stories, we give children options - and therefore empower them - when we teach them that they can report abuse, when they know that someone will listen.

