

Positive Parenting
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NO MORE BYSTANDERS!

In June, one of my daughters was in a bike accident on her way to work. The driver of the truck she'd had to swerve to miss, causing the accident, rolled down his window, asking "Are you okay?", but didn't get out of the truck to help. The group of construction workers nearby didn't offer help, although she sat on the curb stunned for 20 minutes.

Later, in an email to me, she wrote, "The most upsetting thing about the entire event was that there were all of these men working nearby ... and none of them said anything at all, not even, "Hey, you ok?" It was really sad. It made me all the more committed to be someone who never lets someone be hurt without taking notice. Thanks for raising me in a way that taught me to never just be a bystander."

Bystander. That rang a bell. Barbara Coloroso's superb book *The Bully, the Bullied, and the Bystander* helped me understand that bystanders permit bullying to continue. Without bystanders, bullying on the playground, in cyberspace, or on an international playing field cannot continue. So, what would it take to help all of our children leave the apparent safety of being a bystander to step forward, to stand up for the person who is being hurt, and to stop this cycle.

CONNECTION First, our children and youth need to understand that all of us are created by God in God's image. Jesus calls us into a family relationship with one another when he taught us to pray, "OUR father..." We need to help our children see and hear us making that connection, especially with others who don't look like us, dress like us, speak our mother tongue, or live in our community. These are our neighbors. These are our brothers and sisters. Model it. Talk about it. Connect the dots.

COMPASSION Second, let us raise our children to feel with others, to experience empathy, to imagine being in one another's shoes. Jesus invites us to leave judging others to God, and to "Love one another as I have loved you." Ask questions that help children and youth to experience another person's pain from their perspective. "How do you think that would make you feel?" "What does he or she need and want?" "What could we do to help?"

COURAGE Third, it takes courage to stand up for another person who is being attacked, to swallow the fear that the attackers will turn on the defender. It takes courage to face someone else's injury or pain. It takes courage to know that it will be inconvenient, time consuming, and vulnerable to step into the life of the one who is hurt. It is so much easier to brush it away with a simple, "It's not my problem. I don't even know that person."

But that wasn't Jesus' response. He told the Parable of the Good Samaritan, replying to the question, "Who is my neighbor?" It is the story of the least likely one putting everything on the line for a person he didn't know, from a tribe that would have scorned him. Jesus then asked the questioner, "Who was his neighbor?" The answer, "The one who showed mercy." Jesus tells us all, "Go and do likewise." Let us teach that to our children, so that there are no more bystanders!

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

1. From a children's or adult bible, read the Parable of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-37 and discuss.
 - Why do you think that the priest and Levite passed by?
 - Why do you think the Samaritan man stopped?
 - What did he do for the injured man?
2. Tell a family story about a time when someone in your family stepped in to help someone else.
3. Talk about the ways people are hurting in your kid's school, the neighborhood, community, or world. Name one very specific thing you could do for them ... and then do it!
4. Ask, "Why do you think people are bystanders?" Discuss what it would take to become involved.
5. As a family, pray for the courage to be one who steps forward to help.