



**Marilyn Sharpe**  
Ministries, LLC

612-202-8152

[EMAIL](#)

[WEB SITE](#)

## A TERRIBLE THING HAPPENED

4/ 11/ 2019

Yes, it did.

And I do know that many terrible things happen in the lives of children, adults, families, and those who love them. But, this one took my breath away and got me to reach out to 150 people in my network for ideas, support, and resources. Here was my email:

*Dear smart, compassionate, wondrous parents and family-serving professionals,*

*Here is a request I never wanted to make. Do any of you have a suggested resource or number of resources to read to a kindergartner, whose father was taken by ICE as he walked her to school? She and her mother are both US citizens, but the entire family is obviously rocked by this event that tore the family apart. This is trauma.*

*I know that there is no easy fix, and probably not a single book that meets this child in her story, but I was dumbfounded by this horrific event.*

*You are the smartest collection of people I know, so I am turning to you for ideas. I also know that each of you loves children, cares deeply about families, and is deeply resourceful. Ideas, please. It doesn't need to be perfect, just a place to turn for wisdom, to lessen the isolation, to begin some healing, to offer hope.*

I am blessed with loving, compassionate, resourceful friends, colleagues, and family-serving professionals, who responded, with love, with compassion, and, yes, with some excellent resource ideas.

Virtually all responded with sorrow, prayers, empathy, and concern. One incredible friend, a therapist, offered a number of free sessions to the family. A number of parent educators and family professionals recommended resources. I purchased a number of resources to make available to this family and as a lending library for others. I want to share two of these for families, congregations, and circles of supportive friends, who are faced with "terrible things."

**A Terrible Thing Happened** (A Story for Children Who Have Witnessed Violence or Trauma) by Margaret M. Holmes and Cary Pillo

This book never specifies the "terrible thing" that happened. The main character, a young animal, saw something awful and has stomach aches, nightmares, fear, and exhibits behavior that acts out of those feelings. Finally, a wonderful resource at school is available to listen, to ask open ended questions, to offer comfort, to share strategies, like drawing pictures, to deal with the "terrible thing." It is a long, slow process, but offers healing.

**The Invisible String** by Patrice Karst and Joanne Lew-Vriethoff

Young children, terrified by a thunderstorm, seek comfort and reassurance from their mother. She offers them comfort and physical touch and a safe place, then reassures them that, even when they are apart, they are always connected by "the invisible string" of love, no matter where they are. They can always rely on the invisible string to be there for them, even when they cannot touch or see the one who loves them.

## ADDITIONAL WISDOM

- **Presence.** No, you don't have to have the right words or to feel comfortable or know what to do. Just show up. Your physical presence is wonderful. Touch, a hug, or simply being there is amazing. If that is not possible, call, email, text, or leave a voicemail.

- **A simple task.** When a former neighbor's young child was hospitalized with cancer, a friend and I cleaned her house ... no, not perfectly, but we did it ... and did their laundry. Can you watch a child, make a grocery run, provide a simple meal, take someone to an appointment?
- **Pray.** Jesus invites us to pray without ceasing. We can do this. A former executive director taught me to move beyond saying, "I will be praying for you," and simply pray aloud ... or write that prayer in a text, email, card, or letter.
- **Listen.** When someone is dealing with a "terrible thing," often the most important thing we can do is just to listen. No, we can't fix it, but we can create a safe space to name sorrow and fear and tell the story over and over again, if need be.
- **Don't explain for God.** Don't we wish we understood the big "why's" of the terrible things that happen and that, in explaining, we could take away the pain. Trying to explain often causes greater pain or paints God as the intentional author of the "terrible thing." Name God's loving presence. Don't feel you have to explain or predict when and how the pain will lessen or the heart will heal.
- **Keep showing up.** Name the invisible strings that connect you and give regular evidence of it. Those connections are vitally important.

Links to learn more!

[SPEAKING!](#)  
[COACHING!](#)  
[TEACHING!](#)  
[SPEAKING!](#)

This is the perfect opportunity to call or email Marilyn

612-202-8152     [EMAIL](#)

STAY CONNECTED

 Like us on Facebook

 Forward this email  
to a Friend