

Heroes Among Us

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School shootings, children separated from their parents, suicide, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, floods...these are just a few of the devastating headlines coming through the radio and across my newsfeed. Not to mention, there are so many more personal stories of families experiencing a serious health issue of another family member, children caught in the middle of a custody battle, or even children being intimidated by a menacing bully on the playground. If you are like me, these news reports and life events leave me feeling sad and helpless. Imagine, then, how much more devastated and vulnerable our children may feel. What can we do to help our children develop core values so they can be strong in difficult situations?

Be a Hero

Parents should help instill positive, core character values in their children. Are the traits of *Hope*, *Courage*, *Perseverance*, and *Integrity* being modeled and practiced at home? Think about the words and tone of voice you use when you hear about discouraging news.

When we react to a less than ideal situation, our children observe and mimic our behavior. Are children being taught to respond positively? When children are confident and affirmed that they possess these qualities, then they are able to practice and extend *Compassion and Generosity* towards others. This is the first step in helping children see that they can be a positive change agent. In the face of difficult situations, they can be a hero to their brother, sister, friend, or stranger.

Be a Good Neighbor

When I was growing up, the popular children's TV show *Mr. Roger's Neighborhood* always started with the theme song, "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" The simple invitation always got the audience thinking about taking the first step to being proactive with others. Are your children getting enough interaction with neighbors? Are you inviting neighbors over for a BBQ or potluck? Are you chatting with neighbors as you sell homemade lemonade on your front porch on a hot summer's night? Are there impromptu swimming parties or evening movie nights in each other's backyards? Fred Rogers also famously said, "When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.'" What better way for children to learn how to be helpful than by first being good neighbors?

Parents must lovingly instill these qualities of *Hope, Courage, Perseverance, Integrity, Compassion and Generosity* in their children and frequently validate

their kids. The message must be clear: You can help others and be a good neighbor. A hero does the right thing, for themselves and for others, even though it may be difficult.

I have always wanted to have a neighbor just like you.

Since we're together, we might as well say,

Please won't you be my neighbor?

Jaime

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