



Look for the Helpers Part 2

BY SUSAN E. MURRAY

When Mr. Rogers' mother told him to "look for the helpers," she was teaching him two important life skills. One was to be observant, which we focused on last month, and the other was to be hopeful and optimistic, to find the calm in the storm. Not only did Mr. Rogers learn from his mother that he could find the helpers amidst the chaos, he learned he could also be a helper.

Actually, some research has been done in this area. C. R. Snyder of the University of Kansas at Lawrence, found that hopeful kids aren't passive bystanders. They take control, pinpointing goals and figuring out ways to meet them. We all know that success breeds success, and in experiencing success, hope takes root and flourishes.

Some children are born with more easy temperaments, and these children have a higher probability of growing up hopeful, but parents can really change the way their children think about themselves and the world. Snyder suggests that if parents can give any gift to their kids, even more important than intelligence, it should be hope.

Kenneth Pargament, a professor at Bowling Green State University in Ohio, suggests, "Put tragedies in

context. Tell your child that despite horrible events, some things remain sacred and can't be destroyed—such as your love and caring for each other and your faith in God." Andrew Weaver, a Methodist minister who provides spiritual care to 32 hospitals in the New York City area, is quoted as saying, "Children and adults who have a caring faith feel loved and nurtured by God as well as by the others in the community or congregation. The child feels we are all going through this together, not as isolated individuals. Spirituality is not only a great source of hope, but it's also a great conservator of it."

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A ten-year-old girl was interviewed the other evening on television, as she has been instrumental in making more than 20,000 bracelets for individuals who have loved ones in Iraq. It all started with one uncle and one bracelet made with hemp and yellow homemade beads. She sent the first bracelet to her Marine uncle, and he in turn wrote her a letter of thanks. His appreciation encouraged her to get busy, and she's accomplished a tremendous job with a positive and hopeful attitude. Providing children opportunities and allowing them to make a difference is also a strong component of helping children to be hopeful. Even enlisting a child at home for "help" rather than just "chores" can convey that you see your child as a valuable family member rather than just a kid doing work for an allowance. When children believe the world will be a better place because they are in it, they are hopeful, confident, and productive. They are then free to serve a living God.

Just as volunteering to help others restores our own sense of control as adults, a child's ability to contribute can boost confidence too. Our children deserve to learn the reassuring lesson, that in our world there are more good people and kind acts than bad people and evil deeds.

Yes, we live in a world of sin, and Satan terrorizes people; but God does not want that for us. He does not desire for us to live in a spirit of fear. His desire for us and our children is to live in His light and to light the way for others with a spirit of optimism and hope.

