



WE ARE, ALL OF US, RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT HAPPENS TO CHILDREN.

WHEN A CHILD IS UNSAFE – DON'T IGNORE IT. WHEN A PARENT SEEMS STRESSED, OFFER SOME SUPPORT.



Imagine that you're in a mall, a grocery store, a restaurant, a bus or playground...

You see a parent losing her temper with her young child. The child could be tired and cranky. His mother looks overwhelmed, stressed, and angry...She's grabbing his shirt, shaking him and speaking close to his face in a low, tense, and threatening voice...

What do you do? Any parent could have "one of those days." Any of us could "lose it." But, as bystanders, each of us could also find a way to make the situation better.

One kind word can help. Stop, take a moment...Try connecting with that parent and child. "It's not easy, is it? Is there anything I can do to help?" Or "I remember when my child used to do that – hang in there." Or you could distract attention away from the child by simply moving closer to the situation or talking to the parent or child (about anything – the weather, the public setting where you are, etc.) Or offer to help.

Sometimes an extra pair of hands is all that is needed.

We can all use support in raising kids...

You're walking along the street in your neighborhood

and you see a father lock his sleeping infant in the car as he runs into the drug store. He probably doesn't want to wake the baby while he dashes in to pick up a prescription... and it's not very hot outside. Should you do anything? Could you wait by the car for a few minutes to see if the baby wakes up and is distressed? Even without saying a word, your being there when the father returns might show him that leaving his baby in the car wasn't really a good idea...

Your 9-year-old daughter has a friend over to the house.

The friend has a black eye and bruising on her face. When you ask her about it, concerned that she might need to see a doctor, she tells you that she fell down the steps. Your daughter says later that her friend told her that her mother hit her the night before, after drinking too much. She tells you that her friend hadn't seen a doctor and is afraid to tell anyone the truth. What should you do? Do you talk to the child's mother about what happened? Is it better to stay out of it?

You're with your grandchild at a playground

and you notice a small child running in and out between the swings, seemingly unsupervised. You're getting nervous, worried that he's going to get hit by a swing. A man walks by, talking on his cell phone. He sees you watching the boy and says, proudly, "That's my son – he's fearless!" He continues his cell phone conversation, beginning to walk away from the playground now. Should you go after him and tell him how cute his son is and ask him if he could stay nearby to make sure his son doesn't get hurt?



For more information, call the Parenting WARMLINE at Family Resources, 1-800-641-4546 or 1-877-WARMLYN.

You should call Allegheny County's Child Abuse Report and Information phone number, 412-473-2000.

You can make that call and remain anonymous.