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What if you see an abused or neglected child? What if you think a parent is harming their children? What is our responsibility in this situation? By now, most readers are somewhat aware of the trauma inflicted on innocent children when they are 'protected' by child protection agencies. Most people today face this moral dilemma by copping out, regardless of the consequences to the children. They don't want to assume any responsibility and will excuse their apathy by delegating thumb-fingered professionals to handle it. But these professionals don't really care, they have no emotional investment in the families they 'help,' not like a friend or family member does. Do we really want to leave our neighbor in need to the harsh ministrations of a self-righteous child saver? I couldn't hope to say it any better than Conner did:

"A couple of years ago, my best friend who lived two blocks over from me was beside herself about a little 7 year old girl who often played with her children. The child wandered the streets late at night; was usually dirty; oftentimes went to school unwashed and unfed. Her mother had left the family, the father was an emotional wreck, unemployed at the time, and losing his house. My girlfriend told me about it, and said she was thinking of calling children's services.

"She was quite taken aback when I rounded on her angrily and told her that if she felt compassion for the child, she should not use the government to do her "compassion," she should do it herself.

"I asked her, if she caused the child to be placed into foster care, could she guarantee that the child would be safe and properly cared for. Her answer was no, but foster care would "protect" the child. I burst out laughing at her naivete. This having been the first time we ever had a quarrel, I calmed down and explained just exactly what type of "protection" and "care" this child may receive. Needless to say, she was horrified. I still chuckle when I remember the look on her face, since she was once a supporter of children's services. It felt good to smash her rose colored glasses regarding CPS.

"So, I advised that if she really wants to help the child, then do so. Allow the child to come to her house after school, feed her, allow her to take warm, soothing baths; wash her hair; help her with her homework; give her hugs and kisses; take her bowling or skating with her children; if the child's father isn't home, have the child for a sleep over; give the child breakfast in mornings and put her on the school bus with a warm hug and kiss to start her day. No strings, no demands, no punishments - on anyone.

"The child adored her father and he did her, even though he wasn't taking very good care of her at the time. The father took notice that his child was being cared for by my girlfriend, he came over and offered to reimburse her for some of the expenses she incurred. He asked my girlfriend if his child could live with her for a while to give him breathing room to get things straight. He came to see his child every single day. My girlfriend told him everything that happened with the child - every s*bad word*e, every accomplishment, every problem - so he would feel involved and not feel like she was trying to take his child.

"It was hard work for my girlfriend because the child was also a chronic bed wetter. But, the informal arrangement worked out. The father got himself a job, found a new place, got himself situated and then came and got his child. The child was safe, being well cared for, and she DID NOT LOSE her father. A far cry from what would have happened had my girlfriend acted on her knee-jerk reaction, like most other people would have, by calling CPS. We still marvel and celebrate that this child had not been

reported to CPS by the school.

“After reading the books and articles that I have since shared with her, my girlfriend is no longer uneducated regarding the heinous practices of CPS. On a personal level, she also found that exercising personal compassion and giving personal help to others is far more helpful to the recipient and emotionally rewarding to her, than using government to act out her “compassion.”

“She feel that she did right by the child by personally reaching out to her, and not getting government involved. This is the type of “care” and “compassion” we need to start exercising with others, and stop using government to do it for us. If we can pretend that we had no Child Predator Services, and ask ourselves what can we personally do to help the child we are concerned about, sometimes we may come up with amazing, creative answers that will really help and protect the child involved and just as importantly, help to preserve the family for the child.”

Perhaps you are afraid you take too great a risk by intervening in this fashion. But CPS dragging away their screaming kid is not necessarily the solution, either. Perhaps you could assist them with finding a family member who can offer respite care. At least give the offending parents advance notice of your concerns, even if it means slipping an anonymous note under their door. Above all, If you must report to the authorities, make sure you are reporting a situation that does rise to the statutory definition of abuse or neglect. If you must call someone, don't call CPS, call the police. And pray that the children are not harmed worse by whatever happens as a result. And if they are harmed, have the decency to shoulder the guilt for your part in that harm.

Our society undermines the concept of taking personal responsibility. The principle of self-sacrifice has vanished. We don't want to get involved. We want others to address the issue in their own clinical fashion, devoid of emotional involvement. But sometimes emotional involvement has the beneficial effect of moderating harsh remedies, of humanizing the problems and tailoring the solutions to meet that individual's needs. Clinical detachment when dealing with family issues is clearly a double-edged sword which is abused by child savers.

This one woman's short-term, personal investment in a hurting family was an investment in our society as a whole. It didn't cost the taxpayers anything and the child suffered no harm at her hands. It seems that one compassionate amateur can make a positive difference in the life of a child at risk, and put the professionals to shame at the same time. I wish there was an award for this unsung hero.