



A MAN WITH A MOP

Recently, I was having a cup of coffee at McDonalds (yes, McDonalds) watching customers coming and going. I became fascinated with an employee mopping the sidewalk and generally cleaning up on the outside of McDonalds. He was so focused on this job, and he clearly enjoyed it.

As I sipped my coffee, I noticed a customer approach the restaurant. Before he reached the door he stopped to talk to the man with the mop. Clearly they knew each other. My impression was that the customer was a regular, and exchanging greetings was a daily ritual. As they talked, suddenly the customer broke down and began crying. The man with the mop set his mop aside and gave the distraught customer his full attention. He didn't say a word...he just listened. After 2 or 3 minutes the customer smiled and thanked the man with the mop and entered McDonalds.

In my last MY VIEW I talked about how looking for helpers in tragic situations can help emergency responders reduce their stress and maintain their perspective. I now realize after witnessing the helping behavior of the man with the mop that my previous focus on emergency responders was too narrow. I realized how inspired and energized I was when I witnessed one person helping another in my everyday life.

Helping encounters occur all around us, but we usually don't notice them. We tend to think that helping happens in structured settings like therapists offices, through helping agencies like TIP and by first responders. But most helping, including crisis intervention occurs in the barbershop, on barstools, in families, at church, between friends and yes, at McDonalds.

Since I've made an effort to look for everyday helpers I've seen a teen walking an elderly person across a busy street; a neighbor helping a neighbor jump start his car; a family member visiting her elderly parent in a skilled nursing facility; and grandparents watching their grandchildren to give the parents a night off. All of these helping acts seem routine and "no big deal." But I've decided I will not take them for granted anymore. I believe that appreciating these informal helpers and letting their helping actions wash over me is good for my health.

It's hard to avoid seeing the tragedy and crime that occurs around us. The media constantly bombards us with the bad things happening in our communities. We don't tend to notice the affect this constant exposure to crime and tragedy has on us, but it's draining and discouraging. Longer term, If we are not careful we can become cynical and numb.

The antidote: The advice From Mrs. Rogers which I wrote about in my last MY VIEW: *"Look for the helpers. You will always find people helping"*