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## Dear Daughter, In Face of Tragedy Try to Keep Your Spirit Intact

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## Dear Daughter, In Face of Tragedy Try to Keep Your Spirit Intact

By Leandra Preston-Sidler  
UCF Forum columnist  
Wednesday, June 15, 2016

*"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.'" – Mister Rogers*

Dear Daughter,

This week your mama's birthplace, and where you took *your* first breath, suffered an attack that I am selfishly grateful I do not have to explain because you are only 2½ years old. So I sat you in front of Mickey Mouse while we watched the news. I sat you in front of the "bright spot" of Orlando while we descended beneath darkness.

But one day, you will discover hate and hurt and violence through your own unfortunate experiences because in life it is inevitable to know pain. No amount of love I carry for you, no matter how broadly or tightly I wrap my arms around you, can protect you from the hard edges of life.

I hope you are never the victim of senseless tragedy. I hope you never have to learn about hate in such a violent, horrific manner. I know I cannot shield you from the ills of the world but I hope I can teach you to look for the helpers. And when given the opportunity, be a helper.

Do the right thing. Stand up for those around you. Stand up for yourself. Intervene when possible. Speak up and out. Surround yourself by good people as much as you can know they are indeed "good" people you trust.

Try to stay as aware as you can. Don't bury your head in your phone in public places. Try not to bury your head in your thoughts in public. Sad as it is, daydream in safety. This is

not enough to protect you but pay attention as much as you can. It matters. We need you.

Talk to me. I know I am your “mom” but I love you unconditionally. I always will.

I do not want to be your friend because I have a role in your life that is so much deeper and it is my job to guide and love and teach you and I will always, always be here for you. As long as I have a breath in my lungs, you can talk to me. And longer.

More than anything, be empathetic. It can be hard to feel pain and even tougher to act on those feelings but they may be the only glimmers of hope for some. I am an idealist and always have been, always plan to be.

More than anything, as difficult or exhausting as it is, I hope you will be too. Never let anyone stamp that out of your heart or spirit. We need you. In a culture, a generation that is referred to as “selfie,” narcissistic, selfish, I hope you will love yourself but never forget to love others, too. Selfish should not be permitted to define an entire group, nor should any other derogatory term or defining characteristic.

Be a leader. Rabble-rouse. Let your heart explode whenever possible but keep your spirit intact.

We need you.

Mama

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