

Getting Help for Your Child When They're Assaulted

"Auntie, these girls beat me up," my niece cried as I gave out tickets for the school carnival. I turned to Erin and her face had dirt smeared on it, her hair was messed up and she was bruised. I picked up my cellphone to call my husband who was with my daughter, DÁndra at the school fair.

"Honey, Erin has been beat up," I said. "I'm going to call the police."

My husband, Jerome replied, "I'm coming over right now."

The principal was nearby and I explained what happened to Erin. He asked Erin to describe the girls and he instantly knew who they were because they had a reputation for trouble. "Don't call the police," Jerome told me. "I'll take care of it."

The principal searched for the girls who had already left the carnival. In the meantime, my husband took Erin and her friend home while I closed down the carnival. I was furious that my niece had been assaulted, because my sister had sent her from L.A. to live with us in Kansas City to avoid this kind of situation.

I went ahead and called the police to file a report. While filing the report, I discovered the girls that had assaulted Erin were well-known by law enforcement. "We've been watching them for awhile and we're called out to their home frequently."

I told the police officer I wanted to visit the girl's mother to give her a piece of my mind and he advised that I not contact the mother. I was enraged that these girls—who already had an extensive record—could attend school without fear of

retribution, and that the mother was a part of the problem. I wanted to scream at the woman that she was a horrible mother.

Growing up, we had a certain way of taking care of things. I saw my mom wait to beat up a woman who had called her names and spread rumors about her. We didn't consult the authorities. We took care of situations by beating up the person. I had been in fights to defend my brother and my sister.

Since I had been a Christian for more than 20 years, I knew that beating up the mother wasn't the solution. I was still furious and I poured my heart, my fears and my rage out to the only one who could bring justice to this situation. The solution to the resolving the assault was in prayer.

I was contacted by the juvenile detective later that week who asked if I wanted to press charges. I believed in battling in the heavens for Erin, but also in using every available means within the justice system to get help for the girls who assaulted her. "Yes, I want to press charges," I told him. He was surprised because, he said, very few parents would proceed with pressing charges.

"Most of the parents I deal with want the incident to go away," he said. "They don't want to cause a ruckus and hope the whole thing blows over. But I know from experience that if no one comes forward, the assaults will go on."

The detective warned me that it would take up to a year for the girls to go on trial in a juvenile court. "If you still see them, you can't do anything unless they are on your property," he said. After we pressed charges, the girls walked down our street but stayed off our sidewalk.

I wanted to scream at them when I saw them walk by, but my husband and God held me back. During that year of waiting for the detective to gather his evidence, I prayed every time I drove past their home that they would move away. I discovered

how unsafe they were for our kids and didn't feel any pull to witness to them.

Instead, I felt like enforcing God's authority to bring safety to my neighborhood by praying that they would move out. Within several months, the city had condemned the home and they had to move out. The girls also moved to another part of the city where we had no more contact with them.

The case went to trial and Erin had to testify against the girls. Despite the numerous cases against the girls, we were the only parents who came forward to testify at the hearing. They were sentenced to juvenile detention. Erin and I had forgiven the girls, but we wanted the girls to get help that they needed from state intervention.

During this time, I learned some things that could help other parents who may be dealing with an assault on their child:

Your child's response echoes your response. We can wonder why God didn't protect them, but that question is a waste of energy. We live in a fallen world with a predator who is determined to steal, kill and destroy without any consideration of age, race or gender.

The enemy used the girls who assaulted my niece. I could have responded by accusing God of not protecting Erin. Instead, I called on Him for protection and justice. Erin also believed for justice and God's righteousness in the situation.

God is more than able to execute justice because He is the ultimate judge. Even if justice doesn't come in the form of a court order, God will have His way when we respond to Him.

Get help for your child. Erin has amazing resilience but I sought pastoral counseling for her. We talked to her as was needed to make sure she was recovering. The best help for her was to get everything back to normal as soon as possible. As

she fell into her normal routine, the incident became a shadow against a backdrop of a busy life of school and social activities.

Pray strategically. To get God involved in your child's ordeal, call on Him. Pray and believe for God's justice. Forgive the people involved but pursue every available avenue for righteousness in the natural and spiritual realm. Pray every time you pass by the school or you see the person. These prayers don't have to be long, drawn-out prayers, but bursts of intercession.

An attack on your child could cause you to shut out God, who is the only one who can step in and help. The best guard for your child in a fallen world is to draw close to Him. Invite Him into your family by being an example of responding to Him, praying strategically and drawing on the resources in your church for your child to get help.

Leilani Haywood *is the editor of Spirited Woman eMagazine. She is a Kansas City, award-winning writer and columnist. Her work has been published in the Kansas City Star, Metro Voice and other publications. Follow Spirited Woman on Twitter @spiritedmag.*