

Over the last few years, when tragic events took place, the most often-quoted words from [the late children's television host] Fred Rogers was "always look for the helpers." What is often not quoted was how Fred explained that. He said, "Because if you look for the helpers, you'll know that there is hope."

I think it is important to know that it is the sense of profound hope that overcomes the profound sense of grief and loss or fear and anxiety. I used to think Fred's advice was only about looking to the police, doctors and other rescuers featured in the particular news event. I came to feel strongly that it is also about having regular conversations with children and grown-ups in our neighborhoods about the "helpers" much closer to home, all around us, in our own communities.

We get a sense of hope, not only from people far away who are assisting the wounded and injured, but also people near us—some of whom we might even know—who believe in and are working to make gentle the life of this world for children and families. At the Fred Rogers Center, we follow the helpers around: the child care providers, the mentors who work in after-school programs, the child life specialists in hospitals, the crossing guards. We film what they do and have a conversation about what is meaningful about their work and how it impacts children. Fred asked us to be helpful appreciators, which I think helps build a sense of "we."

Love triumphs over hate. When we despise a neighbor because of a political campaign sign, the resentment and anger goes both ways. Draw your own conclusion: You can be on the side of love, peace or justice, or you can succumb to war, hate and greed.

— Interviewed by Cristina Rouvalis

BE HELPFUL APPRECIATORS

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