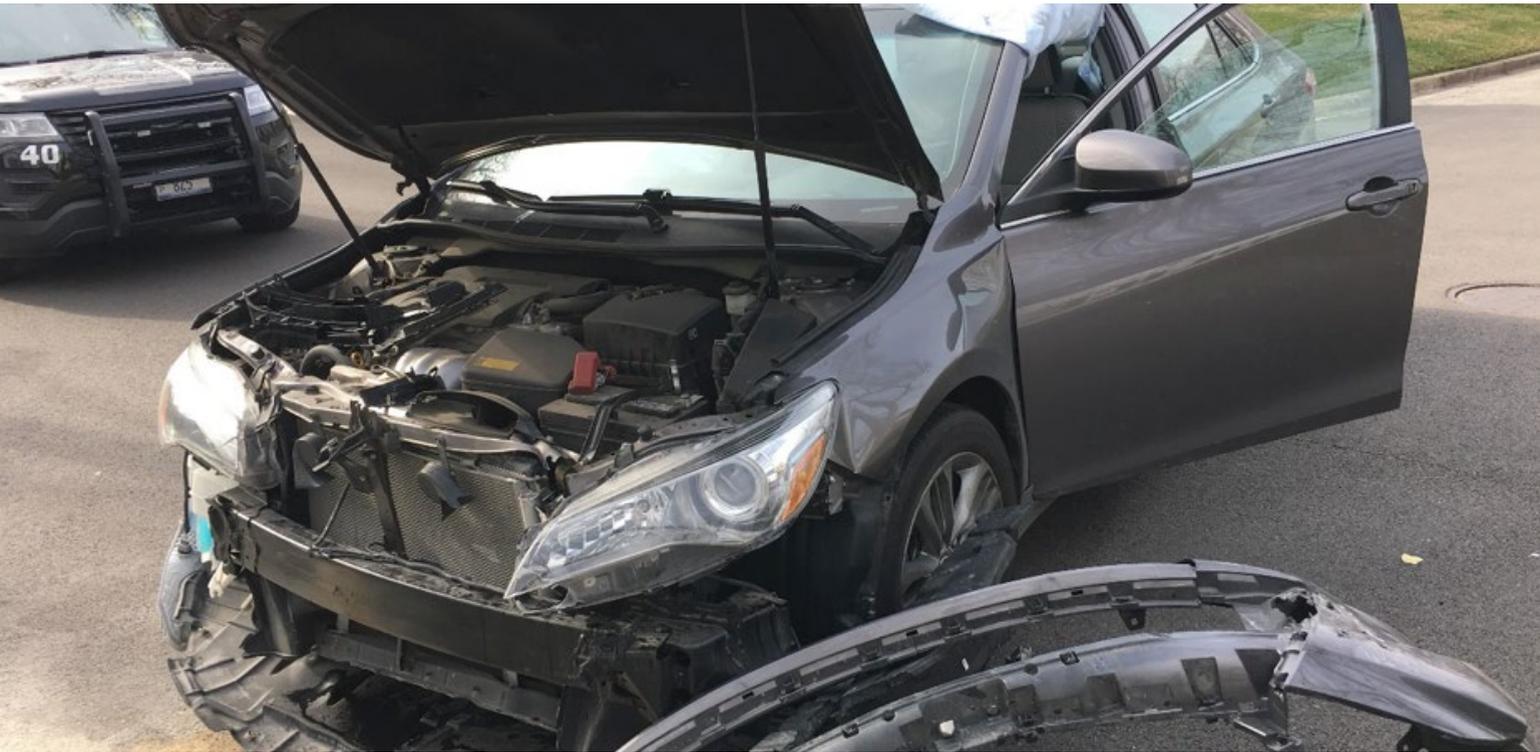




JPA

Juvenile Protective Association



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“Our true selves tend to be revealed in a circumstance like this.”

It's been a tough few months for my car. In January it was [stolen](#), and this weekend, it was totaled. You might ask why I'm reporting on my car crash. Here's why: It got me thinking about how kids feel when something unexpected and frightening happens to them at school.

I don't know how the accident happened. I made a complete stop to allow cars to my left to travel through the intersection, but I never saw the car to my right. I'm told this particular intersection is known for being difficult to maneuver and many of the residents try to avoid it if they can. I wish I had known that information earlier!

Anyway, as I sat in my car, dazed and unable to escape because the airbags were blocking all the car doors, I could hear children screaming. That was the worst part. As the ringing in my ears diminished and I slowly came out of a daze, I could hear and see the police and firefighters approaching my car. Everyone was very solicitous and concerned about my wellbeing. I wasn't worried about myself, though, I wanted to know about the kids – were they and their parents all right?

When I was finally able to exit my car, I walked across the street to check on them. The car itself was gone by then but the parents, with some neighbors, were still on the scene. I didn't know what to

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expect. As I approached them, I began to apologize. Unexpectedly, the dad reached out and gave me a hug. His wife followed. They assured me their children were fine and asked me how I was doing. They told me they didn't know exactly what had happened either, and that "accidents" happened. One of the neighbors ran over and handed us bottles of water. At that moment I felt emotional. Everyone's kindness spoke volumes. I'm sure part of the reason I'm fine is that they didn't assign blame; their concern about the accident included concern for me. Maybe it would have been entirely different had something happened to their children, but I suspect the family's compassion and tempered response would have been similar. Our true selves tend to be revealed in a circumstance like this.

So, back to kids. When children experience traumatic incidents or encounter behavioral problems in school, what should our response be? There can be consequences (consider the deductible I am about to pay –ouch), but there were no tickets issued. My vote is for parents and teachers to skip the blaming and punitive responses and instead go with kindness and understanding. Perhaps teachers could assign the kids to write about their experiences and share their feelings. In that process, like mine, we can walk away feeling more whole.



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