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If You See Something, Please DO Something! Learn How to Report Child Abuse.

Posted: 4/7/2017

See something? Hear something? Please, do something! This is not an alert warning about a strange package on a subway platform; it is an alert for another type of terror: the abuse and neglect of children. It's everyone's job to protect children, not just the local authorities. April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month; make it your time to learn how to help a child who is at-risk.

It's interesting to me that although the age of social media has dramatically lowered the threshold on privacy standards - many adults are still reticent about reporting their suspicions about child abuse and neglect. How many times do we hear on the news, "I knew something was wrong, but I never thought he'd hurt the baby." Or, "They are always fighting in that house, but you are afraid to get involved, don't know if they could turn on you." This type of "bystander" behavior is far too common.

So, alarmingly, significant numbers of child abuse and neglect incidents go unreported. I am encouraging you to take action. When a child is brought to the attention of the authorities, the children and their parents can get the help that they need to prevent future abuse and strengthen their family. It can mean the difference between life and death for newborns and children under the age of four, when most fatalities occur.

I'm urging everyone to take the steps needed to protect children. Go with your gut, as we hear all the time about other types of dangerous situations. If something is making you suspicious or uneasy, it's worth reporting. I encourage everyone to learn how to recognize the signs and symptoms of child abuse and neglect. Our website www.nysppcc.org offers a guide.

Many people tell me that taking the step of reporting makes them anxious, and that is understandable. Perhaps you are not 100-percent sure about your concerns. Even if this is the case, you can and should take steps to help rescue the child. I counsel parents that if they have a "reasonable suspicion" that a child is at risk, that's enough to make a call to the state's child abuse hotline. Much child abuse occurs

behind closed doors; therefore, it's important for concerned friends, family members and neighbors to be familiar with the signs. And children, particularly younger ones, who may not be in school yet, will probably not tell you that they've been hurt, so concerned adults need to be their advocates if they have suspicions.

Please learn the basic steps and take action.

First of all, if you see a child being abused, or hear a child screaming in pain, call 911. If you have suspicions that a child is at risk, every state has a hotline that you can call to make a report. They will ask for your name and number, but you can choose to remain anonymous. Even if you are not certain about all the specifics, make the call. It's then up to the investigators to follow through.

Yes, taking action may be a bit upsetting. That's understandable, as it's such an important undertaking. Nevertheless, you'll rest easier knowing that due to your intervention, the child and their parent will be getting help and attention. Remember, child abuse is preventable. Everyone must be part of the solution.

For more information on keeping your child safe visit www.nyspcc.org.

The NYSPCC's Annual Spring Luncheon on Wednesday, April 19, 2017 at the Pierre Hotel, features Eric MacLeish, the renowned Boston attorney portrayed in the award-winning film *Spotlight*. He will share his experiences in protecting children from child sexual abuse. For tickets visit (<http://www.nyspcc.org/product/2017-spring-luncheon>)