

Fighting The Urge to Help

Many times I find myself watching someone fumbling with something and must repeatedly remind myself of a fact of life: I have to fight the urge to help, because help isn't always welcome. In fact, it seems it is rarely welcome. And, it isn't "help" if it is forced.

A couple days ago I was with my daughter at the pool, and was watching a kid spreading her towel against the wind—or trying to. I desperately wanted to show the kid that if she turned around and worked with the wind, it would spread her towel for her, rather than continually crumpling it at her feet. But I sat there letting nature take its course. Hoping maybe this realization would dawn on her. It didn't.

A while back I saw some people trying to break into a car. The driver had gotten out and locked the door before realizing she had left the keys lying in the seat. I walked over to ask if I could help. They said "yes." I could see what they were doing "wrong"—or at least why what they were doing wasn't likely to work—but they didn't want to listen to my suggestions and didn't want to move aside to let me try (or get and use the tool I suspected would work better). So I stood there watching as they kept failing and flailing. I wasn't going to impose myself on them. They were still at it an hour or so later when I left the area.

Back to the day at the pool, I saw someone taking a picture of their daughter... with the sun behind her. I wanted to point out that if they wanted to see her face, they only needed to turn a little. But I kept my thoughts and observations to myself. Maybe they wanted a silhouette.

The same applies to those who are in desperate need of rejecting belief in the state. They would rather fumble and fail than to have someone point out the obvious to them. They don't want help.

Personally, I try to keep in mind to always accept offered help. It isn't always easy. Sometimes I have to keep my mouth shut in that case, too. If I believe I know how to do something better than the person who is trying to help, I'll probably have a chance to do it my way after they give up. But, I may just learn something from them.

Be humble enough to allow people to reject your help, and to accept help when offered.