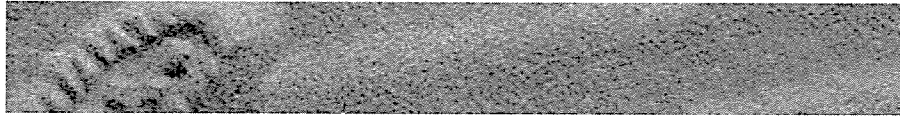


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Super Saturday? Super Friends? Super Heroes!

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karen amster-young :: The Beach Chair Chronicles

**...weekly observations & discoveries from manhattan to the east end...**

"Super heroes are the best," my daughter Alison recently said with conviction as we were walking together in Southampton. She then asked, "Why do there have to be bad guys?" in the same breath. I did not know how to answer; there was no easy answer. The questions were getting harder recently. Finishing Kindergarten had propelled her to a new level of curiosity. I knew that she formed this question as a result of a new super hero "second level" reader and from the bits and pieces of conversation she overheard from grown-up conversation and television. I myself struggled with the same question at least weekly. This week alone I was having trouble shaking the story out of Connecticut about the senseless, barbaric home invasion. I was having trouble shaking the revisited realization that Osama was still out there despite a costly, troublesome, controversial war. "There are more good guys than bad," I found myself saying. "The bad guys get in trouble in the end." "I wish there were no bad guys," she answered. I shook my head in agreement and kissed her, wishing that we were in a fictional story where the bad guys really do get in trouble and that bad things didn't happen. Then I changed the subject; asking her about what she did in camp that day, pointing out a new toy store and just talking. It seemed like the right thing to do. Alright, I thought: I handled that; a six year-old does not have to know more. I wanted to protect her. Not just from the reality of truly bad guys and what goes on in the world but even the little stuff that hurts. I always want to protect her. It was a constant mission

for me: to help her grow, to be confident and strong, to make her understand the really super bad stuff and how to be resilient to even the "little" hurts and the roller coaster of life.

**Super Saturday** – the annual charity designer shopping event in the Hamptons — is for me one of those events I put on my calendar every summer and for some reason never make it. I am either too tired or it's just too hot or I just have other plans; or I just, well, don't feel like going when it actually arrives because I am super tired! Last Saturday, I woke up and felt I absolutely had to go the gym because it had been too many days. I also knew I had to go food shopping unless we were going to exist on Baked Lays Potato chips and ketchup. So I made a choice. I was going to do errands; there were limited hours in a day and evening plans looming (which in the Hamptons seem to start earlier and earlier these days).

I also wondered about a "close" friend; let's call her Lisa who told me during the week that she was not going to Super Saturday ("it wasn't so great last year," she had said when I thought perhaps we would go together). Without thinking I had called her to say hi at about noon on Saturday. "I can't talk," she explained. I could barely hear her. "I am standing in the V.I.P. line at Super Saturday and it is crazy here." Call me sensitive, but I was a little offended. Did she change her mind and just decide to go that morning? Did she simply not want to go with me and not even realized I had asked? The reality is she likely just woke up and decided to go without remembering our conversation since it was fairly informal. Or did she? I usually don't even think about this kind of thing but there have been numerous times lately that I realized I was spending time on the wrong people. I should be spending time on my super heroes! I found it quite annoying since perhaps if she had said she was going I would have mentally planned on attending since the company of a friend is always added incentive. I knew I was not going to lose sleep over this one but I certainly was "insulted" and peeved. Super friend? I don't think so. Was it enough to even confront her about? Not really. In reality, there were many great memories between us.

But it did make me question the people in my life and craziness of my world: Who are true friends? Who are your super friends? And who are the super heroes in our lives? Are we all just too super busy to be super good friends

anymore? Are we not extending simple etiquette to the people we love the most?

Despite one's confidence, age and the resilience that comes with being older and wiser, there are still the little "hurts"; when they build up and you are feeling out of sorts, it is time to reevaluate things. When is it time to donate some time or energy to contribute to the fight against the really bad guys? Whether it is writing your congressman, marching for a cause or just simply donating more time or money to play our part in trying to eradicate the really bad guys, change unfair laws or make changes around us? When is it time to "clean house" and purge your life or those people who, you come to realize, only reach out when there is something in it for them or somewhere along the way, forgot the simple things that makes a relationship just keep ticking. You just need that phone call once in a while that is spontaneous and thoughtful. Those are really the best. Now it is more about 100 e-mails to orchestrate bigger plans. I miss the simpler calls, "Hey, I changed my mind. I am going to Super Saturday. Want to come?"

That stupid but quick call and I would have probably skipped the gym and lived on the baked Chips another day. Or, would I have decided to hang with my family and skip the super designer duds?

I thought to myself, "Shit, am I guilty of this stuff too?" Probably. Maybe we are all just too busy and connecting via Blackberry and the internet? Maybe we just don't truly, truly recognize the real super heroes in our lives; maybe we just have to stop trying to be everywhere and do everything. Our family, our spouse or significant other and certainly our kids make us realize what is truly important and remind us about super heroes and who the really bad guys are. And, of course, making an effort with really great friends that have proven themselves over time. They are so important. They are the ones who think to call you spontaneously or just to make sure you are okay.

Later that weekend I heard from a number of people that Super Saturday was just okay. "It was really hot there and there were what seemed like thousands of people waiting on line and doing the shopping thing," I was informed. Of course, it was for a good cause and part of the summer tradition out here. But, in the end, I was with my super heroes — instead of shopping with a frequently self-absorbed friend — and that is what matters.

So write your Congressman, march in a protest, eradicate the bad guys. And, most of all, take a step back and think about who really matters in your life. I think you get that this is not a column intended to bash Super Saturday; it's a great event for a good cause. This is about reevaluating, reassessing and being present wherever you are. I was eating a great lunch (with baked chips!) in the backyard with my family. I hope my friend missed out on that Donna Karen suit by a split second! Ouch, was that me who said that? Most of all, I hope my daughter doesn't learn too quickly about the really bad guys. I also hope she learns who to spend time and energy on. And lastly, a little part of me, hope she learns to snag that great designer suit for a good cause on a hot sunny afternoon in the Hamptons! All three life lessons are what it is really about.

Have a super day!

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