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When I used to think about helping someone, I thought of picking up their books, or helping them with homework. I have also learned that helping someone could be smiling at them or even just a little wave. My parents have always encouraged me to help where I see a need and this includes helping my teacher and neighbors and volunteering monthly serving meals at a soup kitchen. These things, and many others, are ways that I help. But, there is a small neighborhood girl that I helped and along the way she helped me too.

This little girl is named Izzy Higgins. Just a few years ago something unthinkable happened to her. Doctors found a golf ball sized tumor in Izzy's dad's brain. This was especially terrible because Mr. Higgins had already survived having a different kind of cancer when he was in college. The Higgins family is good friends and neighbors to my family. Someone needed to help Izzy. Mrs. Higgins was very busy taking care of her husband and they also had two older children that needed her attention. I am five years older than Izzy and it became my job to be a primary helper for Izzy. Almost every day I watched her. Izzy's older sister and brother also helped but they were often at the hospital, or trying to get their mind away from the disease that was hurting their dad. Izzy was only five years old when they found the tumor and didn't really know what was going on. I remember having a pack and play set up in my room for the many nights Izzy slept over. It was a horrible year for Mr. Higgins and his family, with many surgeries, and chemotherapy. Izzy was at our house the night her aunt called to say that Mr. Higgins had passed away and Izzy was talking about her dad and I knew that he was gone. I was so sad for my friend.

That may have been the end of my helping Izzy but it turns out that after Mr. Higgin's death, Mrs. Higgins needed me even more. She decided to go back to school to become a nurse. That meant that now Izzy got off the bus with me several times a week while she was in class. I was happy to help. Izzy was like a little sister and she is so kind and funny and she really has a great personality. She just fits right in wherever she is.

Two weeks ago, there was a big party to celebrate Mrs. Higgins graduating from nursing school. Everyone was overjoyed for her. Her graduation, along with Izzy getting older, means that they do not need me as much anymore. But, I am proud of being able to help my friend even though I was only eleven when this tragedy began and I am glad that Izzy considers me a confidante and mentor. She still calls me to come over. The Higgins family has told me how much they appreciate my help but I believe that they have taught me so much about appreciating the things in my life and teaching me about the ability to help others no matter how old you are.