



# Lost and found: *Be willing to ask for help ... and use common sense*

**A** few years ago, I lost our son Jamie while I was looking for a new pair of jeans at a JCPenney store. After organizing a search party comprising just one increasingly frantic father, I decided the best course of action was to run around the department store like a mad man.

Failing to uncover a single trace of Jamie's whereabouts, after 10 minutes, I shelved my ego and asked for help. I came clean with one of the store's security guards. Shaking her head, the security guard sternly said, "Follow me."

I thought to myself: *I ran past this security guard a few times before I asked her for help. I understand her disappointment with me.*

Walking briskly, the security guard unclipped her colossal walkie-talkie, depressed the speak button and shouted "Code Adam! Code Adam!"

Then she turned to me and said, "We're closing off all entrances and exits." I felt reassured ... for a few seconds — until the word "exits" echoed in my ear. I'd never considered that option: the thought of Jamie wandering around the parking lot like a human pinball. My perspective and fear grew.

"We're walking to the mall entrance. We don't need to make this search any larger than it has to be."

*Oh no! I forgot this store was attached to a mall. God help me! Please, please help us find Jamie!*

En route to the mall entrance, the security guard made a pit stop at a cashier kiosk and grabbed a clipboard with a form and a pen.

"What color shirt is your son wearing?" the security guard asked.

"Blue, I think. Maybe black, gray or green. Something dark for sure ... I think." The security guard shook her head, further disappointed.

"Pants?"

"Yes, he has pants on — or at least he did when I last saw him." ... Just kidding. That's not what I said, but it is a line a wisecracking neighbor interjected when I shared this story with him.

"Jamie's wearing black or blue sweatpants, I think," I told the security guard.

Then, out of nowhere, I demonstrated the gift of common sense. I believe it was God doing for me what I couldn't do for myself.

*Oh my God! I'm sitting on a gold mine of information! All I have to do is share these four nuggets and we'll find Jamie in seconds.*

"Jamie has glasses, red hair, Down Syndrome and a stuffed fake snake around his neck that he likes to shake," I proudly offered.

But this by-the-book security guard didn't write down, or share with her coworkers via walkie-talkie, even one of those nuggets — clearly just because we hadn't gotten to that part of the form.

I wanted to scream, "You must be kidding! You're not going to share these nuggets with the entire world? But my cell phone vibrated just then. It was my wife, Bridgid. She no doubt wondered where Jamie and I were. I didn't have the heart (or guts) to take the call and tell her I had lost Jamie.

For a split second, I imagined bargaining with the security guard: *You find me a kid with red hair, Down Syndrome or a stuffed snake, and I'll take him home and fool the wife until we find the real deal.*

Thankfully, better thoughts prevailed. A few minutes later, someone found Jamie. He was "hiding" in the women's dressing room.

This month's take-home lessons:

1. Never be afraid to ask for help;
2. Common sense isn't so common; and
3. Jamie clearly is much brighter than his Old Man and the by-the-book security guard.