

How to give it

Nigel Planer



Actor, writer and comedian Nigel Planer, 56, is a patron of Families Need Fathers (www.fnf.org.uk). He's appearing this month on BBC1's *Celebrity Mastermind*.

What is the first charity you can remember supporting?

Barnardo's. At school, they'd give us a little house at the beginning of term to collect money in. We competed to see whose house had the loudest rattle by the end of term.

Which cause do you feel most passionately about?
I've supported Families Need Fathers for a long time.

They're not the Batman lot [ie not Fathers 4 Justice, whose members scale buildings dressed as superheroes]. FNF is a sort of twofold charity that lobbies government, but also provides a support network for families, children and non-resident parents. Increasingly these days, non-resident parents are women. It should really be called Families Need Non-resident Parents, but that doesn't sound as good.

Do you ensure that your donations are used effectively?

I come across a lot of charity stuff from being in showbusiness, and I do a lot, but when a PR company is involved I think: "Hang on, there's a PR company in here. How much are they on?" When I get the feeling that a university graduate has managed to get money to write a little phrase for a charity, I just react badly. Charities get started for all

the right reasons, but PR companies are earning a living off it. Maybe I'm just an old curmudgeon. Because I'm a patron at FNF, I'm in touch with the people in charge and I trust that organisation.

Do celebrities ever use good causes for their own ends?

Of course we do. With these great big charity gigs, people must be thinking, "This could make my career." A better question is whether celebrities indiscriminately use causes for their own ends. I'm happy with the attention that I can get for FNF, but it would be nonsense to say that I'm also not vain and thinking, "This makes me look rather good." However, I support them for the right reasons. If the attention seeking comes first and the charity comes second, then I think that's unethical.

What do you get out of your giving?

I don't feel guilty. It's more a

pre-emptive' strike. You're so worried about your own kids being ill that you placate the gods with a donation to a hospice for ill children.

Is charity a necessary companion to capitalism?

When big political decisions are made there will always be things that fall through the net. I also think there's an instinct for charity. Altruism is as strong as selfishness and greed.

Is Families Need Fathers primarily for the benefit of children or fathers?

Its primary users are non-resident parents and grandparents, but its primary cause is children's right to have both parents.

*Interview by Angus Watson
howtogiveit@ft.com*

CHESS SOLUTION

1828: 1...Qxf2+! 2 Kxf2 Re2+
3 Kxf3 Bg4+ 4 Kf4 Bh6
mate.