

A Compilation of Kindness Stories &
Experiences to Encourage & Inspire

KINDNESS @work



Volume 1

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Produced by Mari-Lyn Harris

KINDNESS@Work

A compilation of kindness stories and experiences to encourage and inspire



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Produced by

Mari-Lyn Harris of Heart@Work Productions represents heart-centered entrepreneurs and helps them deliver their message to the world. Through inspirational talks, marketing, social media, promotions with collaboration, cooperation & masterminding she connects you to greater possibilities.

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“Beginning today, treat everyone you meet as if they were going to be dead by midnight. Extend to them all the care, kindness and understanding you can muster, and do it with no thought of any reward. Your life will never be the same again.”

~ Og Mandino

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DEDICATION

When I think of Kindness, it makes me want to go M.A.D. (Make A Difference) in this world. That's really what it's all about, isn't it, just endeavoring to have a positive impact, making a real difference for good in other people's lives!

From the stories shared in this e-book, I hope you will be inspired to become a Kindness Merchant! Go ahead... brand yourself as memorable by leaving behind a heart-warming experience for others to enjoy and hopefully pass on. By the way we live our lives and the simple ways in which we express our concern for others, our kindness is at work to make the world a better place for us and for generations to follow.

Thank you for buying this book and passing it on, and by so doing, you are making a real difference. Please, simply forward this [link](#) to your friends.

Mari-Lyn Harris



“Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.”

~ Leo Buscaglia, aka Dr. Love
*Motivational Speaker and Professor, Department of Special Education,
University of Southern California*

FORWARD

By Mari-Lyn Harris

kind•ness - [kahynd-nis], noun

The state or quality of being kind, having a pleasant disposition and genuine concern for others. An act of thoughtfulness, benevolence, generosity or compassion, to show favor, thoughtful behavior, friendly.

Kindness is also a way to “pay it forward”. When I think of a kind act, the movie ***Pay It Forward*** always comes to mind. In this highly inspirational movie (starring Kevin Spacey, Haley Joel Osment and Helen Hunt) young Trevor McKinney, is drawn out of his shell into the public eye when he takes on an intriguing assignment from his new Social Studies teacher, Mr. Simonet. The assignment was to think of something that might change the world and put it into action. Trevor conjures the notion of paying a favor not back, but forward... repaying acts of kindness with new good deeds done to three **new** people. Each of these three people would then become obligated to perform a good deed for another three individuals, etc., and so would begin an exponential cascading of acts of kindness, and not only helpful, but potentially “life-changing” deeds, until these positive actions had fully circled the planet. Trevor is convinced his unique concept had the potential to actually change the world; a pretty formidable task for such a young boy.

Have you ever experienced genuine kindness from an acquaintance or a stranger? Have you ever been moved in some way that causes you say to yourself, “WOW! What that person did was great! I really enjoyed that!” If so, you know what it means to be on the receiving end of gracious, heart-warming experiences that have positively impacted your life, your business or your community at large.

A kind deed towards someone else, without any thought or expectation of anything in return, is to live consciously by playing our part in bettering our world wherever we are.

A greater measure of genuine kindness ought to be seen and experienced at all levels: kindness to oneself, kindness to our family, friends, co-workers, etc. and finally, kindness to and in, our communities.

As the title of this book suggests, kindness really does **work**! As all of us have experienced, various acts of genuine care and thoughtfulness go a long way to tear down walls, soften hearts, bless others and perhaps may even help make a sale or two along the way. Genuine acts of kindness really do have a domino effect.

Intentionally putting kindness to work as a strategy to improve our relationships with family, friends, co-workers and customers will inevitably work to raise the bar in how we all view and treat one another in every facet of human life. The inevitable result will be a better world in which to live!

This collection of stories, offered up by some of my closest friends, colleagues and other contributors, reveal how kindness has remarkably affected, not only the receivers of kindness, but also the ones doing the acts of benevolence, generosity, charity, sympathy or compassion. People who take the time to be kind to others, even in small and often seemingly insignificant ways, serve to make today's world richer while at the same time helping others to believe in an even better tomorrow!

You are cordially invited to read and enjoy these stories which we trust will be a powerful source of ideas and inspiration for you to go out into the world, 'lighting candles' and making new stories of your own that will bring joy and reveal the essence of what it truly means to be "human"!

World Kindness... here we come!

"Find the good. It's all around you. Find it, showcase it and you'll start believing in it."

~ Jesse Owens
Gold Medal Olympic Track Athlete

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I would like to acknowledge the following wonderful contributors without whom this book would not have been possible.

Dawn Lanier is a solopreneur, Small Business Success Coach, accountability partner, mentor and resource well for 'One Woman Band' who runs a business of her own on her own. The CEO of Yes You Can is passionate about helping others create a strong foundation for their success, by using social media to gain visibility and attract new customers in their niche. Known online as 'bizcoachdawn', Dawn is also the creator of Pin Finder, a service that finds niche pins for business owners on Pinterest. She runs several group boards on the new social media platform, including The Small Business Pinterest Connection, and will soon be launching a Facebook group for Small Business pinners. You can find her online at...

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AT THE INTERSECTIONS

by Dawn Lanier

When I was a child, my Father asked me "Did you know that there are Angels and Guides to help you all along the path of your life?" What? You mean like real Angels? "Like real people who are Angels, but without the wings." Are you serious? "I wouldn't kid you about something that important." Will I recognize them when I see them? "Probably not. But when you look back on things, you'll know who they were." Where will I meet them? "They'll be at the intersections." What do you mean? "I mean at points in your life where you'll make a big change, or learn important lessons." Here are three of the intersections that influenced my life path.

Billie

It wasn't a question of 'if' I would go to college, only a matter of where. All I needed to do was get good grades, and then I'd have my pick of schools when the time came. So I studied hard and set my sights on several small private colleges, and a few in the Ivy League.

Then reality hit. Yes... I qualified to get in, but no... my family couldn't afford the hefty costs of tuition for most of the schools on my list. I was never told not to apply to these schools, so this news bulletin threw me off guard.

My mother, who was always very spiritual, said "Stop worrying – you'll block your good. God knows things that we don't. Focus on the open door, and not the closed one." It was great advice, but I still had my doubts.

Weeks later, I read there was a new office was opening to help kids like me find college tuition money. I got there early on the very first day, along with a million other people. It was almost five o'clock before my name was called by a woman with giant piles of paper on her desk.

She was pleasant, and easy to talk to, but she kept staring at me. Then she said "Is your mother's name Kathlyn?" "Yes it is." I replied. "Is her maiden name Hunter?" "Yes... do you know her?" Then she told me a story that touched my heart.

When I wasn't much older than you are now, I was down on my luck, with no place to turn. Out of the kindness in her heart, your Grandmother took me in. That's where I met your mother, who became my friend. Eventually I got back on my feet and moved away. We lost touch after a while, but I never forgot them. They were my miracle when I needed one.

You could have knocked me over with a feather. My Mom kept saying, “Unbelievable!”, when I told her the story. Billie came to dinner the next day, filling our house with laughter and hugs and gratitude.

We talked for hours, swapping stories and catching up. And when she told us that the letter stating that I'd have the extra money for college was already in the mail, there wasn't a dry eye in the place.

I learned many lessons that day that are still with me: Faith is powerful. Hold onto your dreams. Focus on the open door. Trust in miracles. One act of kindness can be so strong, that it vibrates all the way into the next generation.

I wonder if there wasn't another lesson also – that your parents will never leave you. My Grandmother died when my Mom was just 19, and she felt very abandoned. However, in her time of need to have my college money ‘appear’, it was her Mom who showed up, and took care of that need. Maybe the real blessing was the blessed message “I'm still here”.

Mr. Majors

I woke up that morning, half excited, half apprehensive, thinking about the conversation I'd had with Daddy the night before. He had called to wish me luck as I started my internship at a local teaching hospital.

I suppose it was a milestone. I was just about done with my Master's program at Columbia, where I was studying for my degree in Vocational Counseling and Rehabilitation. In less than two hours I'd be starting my first “professional” job, working with the victims of stroke and traumatic injury. Well, sort of professional. I was an intern, which meant I didn't know Jack.

Almost immediately, I felt like I was in over my head. Everyone on the ward was profoundly hurt. Some had strokes. Some were brain injured. Some were quadriplegic. Some had lost limbs. All were forever changed.

It was overwhelming. The term “handle with care” took on a whole different meaning. I knew what it meant, but I'd always associated it with things, not people. Nothing in the library of my experience had prepared me to deal with so much brokenness.

Several weeks passed before I regained my balance, and learned to keep my emotions in check. I was on my way to see Mr. Majors, a gentle widower in his late 60's, who was one of my favorite patients. I explained I'd be showing him picture cards, and wanted him to identify what he saw. Normally, this would be a piece of cake, but for many stroke victims, it's a tall order.

He did OK on the first 2, correctly naming a cat and a dog. Then I showed him the spoon. His eyes said he knew what it was, but his mouth couldn't find the word. He tried again, lips parting, but nothing came.

They parted twice more, and still, nothing came. Then he turned away and closed his eyes, as a single tear rolled down his cheek. I froze – not knowing what to, having no idea what to say. I was only 22, and had never seen a grown man cry. It was like watching something I wasn't supposed to witness – a moment so private, so personal, his pride was laid bare. I took his hands, and held them in mine. We sat there in silence for what seemed like an eternity, until he collected himself.

Fortunately, Mr. Majors eventually made a full recovery and went home. I thought about him from time to time. One day, walking down the street, I heard someone calling my name. I turned around... “Mr. Majors!!!” There he stood with a smile on his face and a rose in his hand. “I never did say a proper thank you. This is for you.”

He'd seen me in the neighborhood, going in and out of the building where I now worked. I was deeply touched, and recalled Maya Angelou's quote about how people would always remember how you made them feel. And I do, because we are forever connected through that singular moment of kindness.

Bestest

I sat on the couch at the end of a very long week, just thinking. I didn't have anything to complain about really – except for a bad case of the “blahs” that I couldn't seem to shake. I knew why - my “joie de vivre” had somehow turned into just “vivre”, and I was in a rut. CRAP! I hated ruts.

The phone rang, and it was Bestest. We call each other “Bestest” because we're the bestest of friends. “What's up girlfriend? You don't sound so hot.”

She was in a financial jam. The kind of jam that if you don't take care of soon, you're going to lose something that's really important to you. I was able to help, so I did, not thinking twice. “I don't know when I can pay you back.” Don't sweat the small stuff, OK? I gotta go.

A few months later I was on a plane headed to Paris. Bestest had given me two weeks in her timeshare, in return for the favor of my help. To say that the trip was fantastic just doesn't do it justice.

I braved the winds at the top of the Eiffel Tower, sat in the peaceful gardens of the House of Monet, marveled at the beauty of The Louvre, drooled at the Haute Couture and thought I'd died and gone to Heaven taking in the scents of real French perfume.

It was like an out-of-body experience. I was the same “me”, with the same personality, but a different “me”, in a different land, exploring new territory, becoming an integral part of the fabric of the larger universe.

I returned nineteen days later, exhausted, rejuvenated, and changed. I had traveled 9,000 miles away from home by myself and was okay. I learned that a smile is part of the international language and that people are the same wherever you go. That we're all connected by the values we place on family, friendship, and the desire for a good and happy life. That fun is just as important to the soul as the air we breathe.

Bestest also taught me an invaluable life-lesson - to give generously and give from the heart, whether that means lending your ear, your shoulder, your smile, your comfort or your “joie de vivre”. When you do, you receive untold blessings that sometimes come in ways that you never imagined.

Dawn Lanier is a solopreneur, Small Business Success Coach, accountability partner, mentor and resource well for 'One Woman Band' who runs a business of her own on her own. The CEO of Yes You Can is passionate about helping others create a strong foundation for their success, by using social media to gain visibility and attract new customers in their niche. Known online as 'bizcoachdawn', Dawn is also the creator of Pin Finder, a service that finds niche pins for business owners on Pinterest. She runs several group boards on the new social media platform, including The Small Business Pinterest Connection, and will soon be launching a Facebook group for Small Business pinners. You can find her online at...

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“Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see.”

~ Mark Twain

KINDNESS LEADS TO AWARENESS

by Dr. Janet

In 1965, a college professor at Johns Hopkins told his sociology class, “Students, I want you to do something for me. I want you to go into the slums of Baltimore, Maryland, and I want you to do a case study of some of the boys you find there. As a matter of fact, with the students here in this class, I want 200 case studies made.” So they went out and did 200 case studies of the boys they found. In every one of the 200 case studies each student said the same thing about the boys they interviewed. They all said, “They haven’t got a chance.”

Twenty-five years later another sociology professor found this study and he had his students follow up. Out of 200 boys 20 of them had moved away to undisclosed locations, or had died. That left 180. Of the 180 boys remaining, 176 were amazingly successful lawyers, doctors and executives. The professor was astounded and so he decided to pursue the matter further.

Fortunately, the men studied were all in the area, so he went to interview them himself. He asked them, “To what do you attribute your success? Twenty-five years ago they said there was no hope for you; there was no way you could be a success.” The same reply came back from many of these men...with feeling: “There was this teacher . . .” The teacher was still alive. She was very old, but very alert. The professor went to the teacher and asked her, “What was the special formula you used to help these boys move out of the slums into successful achievement?”

The teacher's eyes sparkled, and her lips broke into a gentle smile as she said, “I simply loved those boys.”

I love this story and I don’t even know if it’s true. I love it because I know the impact and positive effect that kindness from a teacher can have on one’s life.

My transition from Elementary School to Junior High School was not an easy one. Moving from the safe cocoon of my small group of friends and the comfort of having only one classroom and one teacher, the world of Junior High was frightening for me.

It was challenging for me to adapt to the various teachers and teaching styles; my core group of friends scattered and I felt surrounded by a mass of strangers. It was challenging for me to balance all the homework with being a caretaker for my younger brother and sister. In short, I was failing and flailing.

But there was one teacher who was different. I'm not sure if this teacher saw how I was struggling or if he treated everyone as if they were brilliant; all I know is that his kindness, his understanding, his wisdom, his patience, and his lessons made a huge impact on me. For the first time in my life, I had someone who believed in me! I began to blossom and to grow. I began to believe I could succeed in school and in life.

Over the course of the semester, I was given gems of wisdom; little nuggets I could easily digest. And I was hungry. I didn't know it at the time, but the kindness and guidance I received from this teacher would ultimately lead me to my interest in spirituality.

I was introduced to the idea of visualizing. As adults, sometimes simple ideas such as visualization seem overly simplistic and we don't even try; we like tools, techniques, and practices to be complicated and complex. However, in Junior High the idea of visualizing seemed strange and amazing so I was enthusiastic about trying.

After an evening of visualization, I couldn't wait to get back to school and report on my success and how I felt. Soon, my grades improved, I had a new core group of friends, and even my relationship with my younger brother and sister improved. I was on a roll!

My lessons didn't stop with learning to visualize. Due to my timidity I didn't dare think about what I wanted that was different from what my family wanted. I was shy, unhappy, and lonely. My dreams were about fitting in; they were about not being noticed so I wouldn't get into trouble. My dreams were about doing what I was told. So, perhaps the biggest gift I received from the kindness of this teacher was the permission to dream.

Of course, I didn't soar to success overnight. The semester ended and the mentorship ended as well. I did become a successful student and things went back to normal for me. However, knowledge once learned, cannot be unlearned and those may have become dormant, but they didn't die.

I became a seeker of knowledge. I wanted to understand how life worked and I felt a deep longing to know the meaning of life. Although I didn't realize it at the time, my 20's and 30's were a quest to uncover my own brilliance, my own genius and my own dreams.

And then one day I began to remember the lessons of this kind and generous teacher. In fact, I was in a college photography class when I heard the words in my mind say, "Never let your dreams fade. Never let that image waver. Your inner mind is like a camera and you are in charge of which photos to take and to develop."

I was actually developing photos at the time. After we took the photographs with our camera we would put the film in a special bag where no light could get in. We couldn't see a thing. We had to feel around for the camera cap and trust we were doing the right thing. Then, we had to take the film and transfer it to a special container – still without being able to see. Once in this special container, we could add the developing solution and then we'd have to wait for the solution to do its work.

After the negatives were finished, we took them to a special "light machine" to make the image appear on the photographic paper. We'd adjust the light settings – too much light and the photo would be over-exposed, too little light and the picture would be too dark. There were many times I had to go back 5 and 6 times to the light developing machine just to get the photo the way I wanted.

This tedious process reminded me of those lessons long ago and something wonderful within me began to open up. I began to remember to dream; I began to remember to visualize; I began to tap into something greater; I began to think of possibilities and I began the journey back to myself and back to happiness. Perhaps I had forgotten the end result I wanted or I wasn't willing to wait.

I had put my dreams in the developing solution of my subconscious mind only for the briefest moment and my life was under-exposed.

Despite my search for knowledge and the meaning of life, I had never allowed the image to become fully developed. You see, kindness does matter! Looking for the best in others matters and we need to honor everyone we come into contact with. I was lucky enough to have someone believe in me. Have you ever had a teacher or a mentor or a friend hold you as loving and courageous and strong? Perhaps YOU can mentor someone in this way. This powerful form of kindness has the ability to empower and to inspire someone to achieve greatness!

It is so easy to create limiting stories in our head which keep us stuck. We are so attached to the limited view we have of ourselves, it is often very difficult to see our own talents, skills and passion.

So, a kind word, a kind hand, or a note of encouragement from a trusted mentor, or even a stranger, can make a huge difference. Sometimes, that's all we need to see our value and potential.

I am passionate about inspiring dreams and possibilities and have applied this passion in the following ways: I am a New Thought minister and teach universal spiritual principles and I am also a Dream Building Coach.

My deep desire is to be that catalyst which sparks someone to uncover their own dreams, their own brilliance and their own passion.

The lessons I learned, from that teacher long ago, I also impart to all those I meet:

- Fear and doubt are never the truth
- It's never too late
- You can overcome self-sabotage
- Focus on what you want and never waver
- You are worth it!

Dr. Janet has been a frequent contributor to **Creative Thought Magazine**, has published a weekly e-zine since 2006 with subscribers on three continents, and has appeared as a guest on the television shows *Full Esteem Ahead* and *This is New Thought*. She is also the subject of an interview in the upcoming book, *Women of the Red Rocks* by Anita Rosenfield. Awarded an honorary D.D. in 2011 for her dedication to the field of spirituality and human potential, she has been a catalyst for change and transformation in many lives. Through coaching, counseling, mentoring, classes, workshops, retreats, keynotes, and articles, Dr. Janet helps open hearts and minds to infinite possibilities.

<http://www.prosperitydr.com>

<http://www.cplsedona.org>

““Never believe that a few caring people can’t change the world. For, indeed that’s all who ever have.”

~ Margaret Mead

A LEGACY OF KINDNESS

Ally Piper

“Congratulations! Today is your day. You're off to Great Places!
You're off and away! You have brains in your head. You have feet in
your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose. You're
on your own. And you know what you know. And YOU are the guy
who'll decide where to go.”

*Dr. Seuss,
Oh, the Places You'll Go!*

My college graduation gift from my grandparents was a hardcover copy of **Oh, the Places You'll Go**. The much-loved story about life's journey and the challenges you face was the last book Dr. Seuss wrote before his death. It was a fitting gift. The author who'd been a large part of my childhood reading adventures was now guiding me as I took this really big leap and set out on my next adventure.

I still remember their smiles beaming at me across the football stadium as I shook the Dean's hand on graduation day. They were so proud! They had traveled almost three hours to get there. To stand in the hot sun and watch 2999 other students they didn't know celebrate success so they could catch a glimpse, from across the football field, of the **one** that they did know.

I remember turning back after my obligatory photo and receiving my fake diploma, (“official diploma will be mailed” to you it said!) and I saw them in a sea of people waving and smiling — my parents, my little brother and my grandparents.

What we didn't know then is that mine would be the only college graduation of their 12 grandchildren that they would attend. I was their oldest grandchild and the first to graduate college. When I flip through photos at my parents' house now more than 10 years later, I always pause when I come to the photo of my grandparents and me on graduation day. They are the reason I am not swimming in student loan debt like so many of my friends. Their gift to me wasn't just a copy of a children's story... it was the key that opened the door to the world of higher education for me.

“OH! THE PLACES YOU'LL GO! You'll be on your way up! You'll be seeing great sights! You'll join the high-fliers who soar to high heights”.

Dr. Seuss, Oh, the Places You'll Go!

It was a gift I didn't appreciate when I was studying in the library for hours on end. A gift whose power I truly didn't understand until many years after posing for that photo in my black cap and gown. They had made sure I had “brains in my head,” but I wasn't the only one they helped.

My grandfather always spoke fondly of his time at City College in New York City. The child of immigrants, he was living the dream his parents had left their homeland for. It was the quintessential immigrant story — my great grandfather, Samuel, immigrating in 1905 and great grandmother, Yetta, immigrating a few years later when she was only 16 — both arriving in New York through Ellis Island. Yetta and Sam met in New York; they married and eventually ran a tailor and furrier shop in Brooklyn. They had three children and their middle son was my grandfather, Harold.

With the help of the Army, Harold went on to study dentistry at Baylor University and get a graduate degree in Orthodontics from Tufts University. So not only did he make sure I was educated, I can thank him for my smile as well!

At a time when women were attending college to get their MRS. degree, my grandmother, Ella, studied to be a pharmacist. While she never practiced officially, she was the one to turn to when something was ailing you and her medicine cabinet was always fully stocked.

Harold was successful as an orthodontist and in real estate. Never ones to forget where they came from, my grandparents were generous in giving back to their community and charities that aligned with their values. Education was always a priority for them. They were always checking in with their 12 grandchildren about our progress in school. I remember well the calls and the discussions around the kitchen table during summer visits. But unbeknownst to us, they were also

monitoring the process of other students from other families; students who could not have attended college without my grandparent's help.

It wasn't until 2011 when both my grandparents passed away within four months of each other that the family discovered just how generous they had been. Digging deeper we found college scholarship funds they created that have enabled over 50 students from impoverished backgrounds to attend Tufts and the University of Massachusetts.

At a donor reception held by one of the colleges this past spring, I was able to meet some of the students who were recipients of scholarship funds from my grandparents. Many have been immigrants or children of immigrants like they were. They all expressed gratitude from the bottom of their hearts for the ability to pursue their education. They had big dreams and plans for their future, a future that would not have been possible without my grandparents' great generosity.

And will you succeed? Yes! You will, indeed! (98 and 3/4 percent guaranteed.) KID, YOU'LL MOVE MOUNTAINS!

“So... you're off to Great Places! Today is your day! Your mountain is waiting. So... get on your way!”

Dr. Seuss,

Oh, the Places You'll Go!

When I think about my grandparents and the kindness they spread in the world, there are lessons I've learned and now try to apply to my own life.

Lesson #1 — Never underestimate the value of an education

My grandparents were life-long learners. Even after my grandfather retired he continued to take classes on building wooden boats, astronomy and more. As children, our summers included trips to the beach and chamber music concerts in the evening. They never stopped expanding their minds and encouraged everyone around them to do so as well.

Lesson #2 — Support what you believe in and what is important to you

My grandparents were passionate about education. They had experienced the value in their own lives and made sure that not only did their children and grandchildren benefit, but also students from other families who may not have been able to attend otherwise. Their value and beliefs were evident in everything they did.

Lesson #3 — Give quietly

My grandparents were believers in quiet philanthropy. They did not make a big deal about the scholarships they had funded or the number of students they had helped. They did it for the sheer joy of it, not for recognition or honor.

I've worked in non-profit marketing and PR in the past and many donors of projects I've worked on want their name on the wall, on the building or in the papers so that the community is aware of their generosity. This simply wasn't the case with my grandparents. The recognition they received was in their hearts knowing they were helping others succeed.

Lesson #4 — Begin planting the seeds of your legacy today

Your legacy is what you leave behind. The impact you will make in this world. Your legacy can be shaped throughout your lifetime just like my grandparents. Start today by going out in the world and make the difference you were meant to make. The rest will fall into place!

Ally Piper is an Ideapreneur™ + Marketing Director for non-profits and small businesses on a mission. Through her boutique marketing communications firm, [Brighteyes Creative](http://BrighteyesCreative.com), she helps clients leverage creative, bright ideas and proven high-impact, low-cost integrated marketing techniques to share their stories and get noticed by other people. Learn more at www.BrightIdeasForBiz.com.

SHOWING KINDNESS

Gary R. Johnson

As you already know, kindness in the dictionary means *“the state of being kind, having a pleasant disposition and genuine concern for others.”* My personal belief about kindness is that it really is being able to show gratitude, respect, and helping a person without any expectation of a reward in return. Over the past few years, I’ve had the opportunity to do a lot of kind things for people. In this story, I will only be discussing a few of those things I’ve done that not only helped change people’s lives, but my life as well, both personally and professionally.

Kindness #1: Back in April of 2009, I was taking my morning walk in Central Phoenix when I crossed the overpass around I-17 and Thomas. I saw a lady panhandling for some food, and my first reaction was that she was out there hustling. I’ve seen plenty of people do that in the past, and I know that that’s their way of life. I remember that her sign read, “Please feed me. I’m hungry and homeless.” When I went out for my walk the next morning, I saw the same lady again. This time, I decided to go over and ask her if I could buy her something to eat. Her answer was “oh yes!”

I felt that this lady was really in a bad way, and I ended up taking her to Denny’s for breakfast. Once I gained her trust and knew her comfort zone, I asked her how she had become homeless. She said she was in the military and she couldn’t find any work when she got out. She also talked about how no one in her family would help her. I can definitely relate to her in that respect. After breakfast, the first thing I did was pay for a hotel room for a couple of days. Secondly, I asked if she would be interested in living in a shelter that could provide a shower and three meals a day. Her response was, ‘Why you are doing this for me?’

I told her that I wanted to help her and that God asked me to do so. As you may already know, if God asks you to do something, you just do it. Her wish was granted, and I talked to some people I knew from the Salvation Army. In about a week, she relocated to the shelter and got the help she needed. I received a call from the shelter about a month later asking me if I could stop by. When I got there, I was so surprised to see the same lady I had helped. She looked so different that I

didn't even recognize her. The reason why they wanted me to come was because the lady had some good news; she had a job interview at a local grocery store. I was so happy for her! I was also able to make it even easier for her. The lady didn't know that I was good friends with the employment manager and HR Director at that same grocery store. Once I learned her name, I called them and let them know what her situation was.

They told me that what I'd done for this lady was very kind and that they'd take care of her for me. The following week, the lady got the job working at that store. The funny thing was I received a call from her inviting me to lunch. The first thing that went through my head was "How did she get my phone number?" She told me that my friends at the grocery store gave it to her. I took her up on her offer, and we had lunch at the grocery store. When I showed up, she just started crying and gave me a hug, and said, "Thank you for everything you've done. How can I ever repay you?" I told her I was thankful that I was able to help out and that she could pay me back by simply helping someone else in need.

To see this lady's life change right in front of me made me feel so good inside. It's just such a blessing to be able help people when the opportunity comes our way. The good news is that she is still working at that particular grocery store and has now moved up to management position.

Kindness #2: One very hot summer weekend, I was at a convenience store and I saw this man with his kids trying to get some money for gas. I suspected that the man's kids were very thirsty and were in dire need of something to drink. So I decided to approach the man to ask if he needed help. The man said yes, it would be a blessing if I could help him. He told me that he and his kids walked about 1.5 miles to this store hoping someone could help him. I asked him why he walked so far in this heat. He told me the reason was because he ran out of gas and money. Fortunately, he had a gas can with him. So, the first thing I did was get him and his kids something to drink. Then I decided to give him some gas money so he could fill his gas can. Finally, I gave the man and his kids a ride back to where his car was stranded, and made sure they left safely.

The man thanked me and asked how he could ever repay me. I told him he could repay me by paying it forward to someone else. I felt really good about being able to help this man and his children and beyond that, I just knew it was the right thing to do!

Kindness #3: One day I was at the park playing basketball, and I ran into these kids who were playing on the other side of the court. I noticed one of the kids looked really sad. So I stopped playing, and went over and asked him why he was sad. He told me that no one wanted to play with him because he was too short. I told the little boy he could come over and play with me. I also told him to never let anyone tell him he can't do anything because of his size or how he looks. The little boy was very excited about hanging out with me.

As it turned out, he was also feeling really bad because he had learned his big brother was in a lot of trouble. I told the little boy not to worry about anything, that everything would be alright if he just had faith. I ended up hanging with this little boy more often than anticipated. The reason is because I felt it was my duty to make sure he continued to move in the right direction. I really cared about this little boy and wanted to help him pursue his own dreams. I've seen so many children like him who get caught up in the wrong situations because no one has shown them kindness nor helped them when they needed it the most. As a result, I'm helping him with his education and helping his father find employment.

What kindness has done for me in my own life and business is help me learn how to treat people with respect regardless of who they are and what they do. It also taught me how to be more empathetic and caring when it comes to other peoples' feelings. I've learned that kindness is something you choose to do and develop. Also, when you're showing kindness to someone, you're making a statement about you, not them. I have always believed that when you're showing kindness, not only does it change you as a person, it also has the potential to change the world. Most importantly, kindness has taught me how to open my heart, love my neighbor, and never look down on anyone, especially if I'm not willing to help them up.

Gary R. Johnson is a “Chief People Officer” who helps small business owners live like “superstars.” Known for his friendly, approachable manner and sincere work ethic, Gary R. Johnson has more than fifteen years’ experience in business management and HR. Having worked with both managers and executives, Gary is an expert at finding solutions to his clients’ business needs.

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*“I can’t do everything, but I can do something. If we all did something,
We could conquer anything.”*

~ Robert L. Shimmel Humanita

KINDNESS WAS AN ENIGMA FOR ME

Juliette Wallen

At first, Kindness was an enigma for me. Kindness was something external. I thought of it as something I could put on and take off like a hat. Kindness was a big concept that I would chase as a child. I would delight in its warmth as I performed approval-seeking acts, just to find kindness again and again. As a child, I believed that Kindness was a wispy spirit that would enter or exit a room on whims of its own making.

However, my understanding of true kindness evolved. I began to see that kindness is the opposite of fighting. Kindness is a form of surrender. I learned to be kind through simple acts of personal sacrifice like sharing my sandwich. I learned to be kind and shared my toys when I didn't want to. When asked if I felt good about having been so kind, I replied, "Kind of".

While trying to figure out how to get along better with my teacher, Sister Maria Patrick, who had asked me to use my head for something better than a hat rack, my Daddy urged me to "kill her with Kindness". I tried to visualize just what a kind weapon might look like as my father tried to reel me back in to explain. Daddy said that in life there would always be people that you won't be able to win over. For those moments, it's simply best to just be kind and move on. By using my manners, resisting the urge to talk back and being sweeter than sugar, I learned that kindness was a marvelous defensive weapon like a cloak of invisibility or a magic force field.

Later on, while in retail sales, I learned to be kind to the customer. Kindness meant that the customer was "always right". This really twisted my thinking! "What?" Essentially what my bosses were telling me was that kindness was not only surrender; it must become an insincere doormat.

With that, I ended up on a personal spiritual journey. I decided I needed to become "connected"... internally and externally. I yearned to be part of something bigger than myself. I wanted to belong. At the time, I didn't understand that what I was searching for was **Kindness**.

I moved far from home. The further away I went, the louder my own true voice became. Some may have thought that I had dropped out of life for a bit. The opposite was true. I was listening, recalibrating and accessing just what kind of person I really was. Getting to the point where I **knew** I was truly connected to self and spirit was the moment I knew that I was genuinely kind.

This “kindness” that I was so ardently searching for was in fact... ME!

Once I truly understood the spirit of Kindness, I started walking with her every day.

I smiled at the people who crossed my path thinking they were just like me and could probably use a smile right about now. When I saw a person who could use my help, I helped. I joyfully discovered that this didn’t leave me feeling “less” for having given of myself. On the contrary, I felt connected and greater than before for having broken through my outer bubble of “self”.

Random and unbelievable acts of kindness began to come my way. When I made mistakes or was in need, people were always there to help. At the end of a harried cross country flight my mother greeted me with the words, “Where is your wallet?” I asked, “Oh do you need some money for the parking attendant? I just took out some cash before driving to the airport. Let me find where it is in my bag.” Mom laughed and said, “You don’t have it.” (This was back in the days before 9/11 ID and lengthy security checks.) Puzzled, I thought how could my mother know what I have or don’t have just coming off a flight? With a Cheshire cat grin Mom replied, “Your room mates just called to say that they have your wallet complete with money, cards and ID. It appears you drove off from the bank with your wallet on top of your car. There was a couple that saw this and right away tried to flag you down. They chased you for a while then checked your license to see where you live. You live nearby their home so they returned your wallet to your home immediately.”

At that point I understood that the spirit of Kindness could exist without eye contact, friends in common, or even a prior agreement. I had to wonder if by simply being open to being kind to others, I could somehow be drawing these kind acts toward me.

While walking with the spirit of Kindness, it seemed that there was always an extra set of eyes, ears, and arms at the ready to be kind. One beach day, our four-year-old son ran back to the ocean while I was carrying our two-year-old and all of our beach stuff back to the car. Before I realized our son had run off, a young surfer ran past us, grabbed my running son and returned him to my arms. When I asked the young surfer why he put himself out to do something so kind he told me that I reminded him of his Mom when she was raising him and his brother. I learned that when we recognize that we are really all the same, or when we see ourselves in someone else, there is a desire to express kindness.

After more acts of kindness continued to occur I began to associate these events with a feeling of contentment. I felt good about being part of the kindness loop and knowing that people, I didn't even know yet, were somehow feeling the exact same way as me. This made me **want** to offer my time as a volunteer.

I volunteered for just about every group and school that would allow me to bring our boys. With the great exchange of kindness that I discovered can happen when volunteering, my family witnessed first-hand just how much a community can change for the better by just one individual who has embraced kindness as a way of life.

When the time came for me to re-enter the workforce, I found that I couldn't work at a place where I was only paid in dollars. Then again, we needed the dollars. So the search began for work that would feed the family as well as my soul. I attended seminars with Money & You, Compassion Happens, and the Power of Grant Money. The more I studied, the more I learned that this "kindness-centric" workspace, I was looking for, was something I would have to create myself.

My workspace needed to be filled with kindness and those who would be open to continuing the kindness loop. My hours needed to be accommodating to my family and our ever-changing schedule. I needed to work in a way that allowed me to use my passion for art, people and encouraging others. Does this sound like a pipe dream? Well, you would be right!

Instead of waiting for someone to give me the perfect job, I volunteered to create this myself. The **World's Biggest Dream Board** began as a piece of paper that I shared with co-workers to write our dreams upon as our company closed its doors.

Our neighbors and clients saw the dream board and I invited them to write down their dreams as well. Surprising things started to happen! No, none of us won the lottery, though many of us felt calmer about our perils at that moment.

As a last hurrah, our landlord allowed us to put up a tent in front of our building and participate in the street fair. Our World's biggest Dream Board was ready to be shared with 70,000 people. We were prepared for the hordes of people who would participate in our peace project. Who wouldn't want the opportunity to dream, share and believe in each other? Evidently 69,973 people were not interested. Twenty-seven dreamers did come to write down their dreams, paste photos and share encouraging chatter. Twenty-seven of us were able to take part in sharing the kindness loop.

One might think this low turn-out would cause me to quit. No way! I didn't quit. I clung to the spirit of kindness and allowed her to grow hope in my heart. I knew there was a planet of people just like me who needed to know someone out there believed in their dream. Perhaps the bookstore and the street fair were not the proper venue for the World's Biggest Dream Board. Then I had to ask; what was the proper venue for an invitation given to the world?

The World Wide Web seemed to be the best venue for my project. Though not well known yet as a hub for acts of kindness, I still believed online would be my best bet. In March 2012 I launched the World's Biggest Dream Board using a Facebook Fan page. Our little peace project was believed in and shared, with over 52,000 dreams in our first 5 months.

In that same spirit of kindness, the International Space Station's group, **Fragile Oasis**, nominated me for a peace prize. Believe me, once you open up to the spirit of Kindness; it will change your world.

Juliette Wallen is a curious soul that loves to share her experiences. She has been a writer from the moment she could write, a storyteller from the moment she could speak. Her days and her home are always filled with family, friends and kindness. Juliette is the creator and caretaker of the [World's Biggest Dream Board](#), a safe online space for all to dream, share and believe in each other.

A LIFE COLLECTION OF KINDNESS

Shel Horowitz

In spite of so much wrong in the world, I believe people are basically good. The reason I have so much faith in people is that over and over again, I've found myself in the path of a random act of kindness. Having so many people do kindnesses to me in turn helps me remember to be kind, and I notice people appreciate it.

Let me share a few of the amazing kindnesses people, many of them strangers, have done for me; all the way back to my childhood.

The earliest one I remember was not a stranger. Mrs. Gross, my first grade teacher, had the grace and sensitivity to recognize that I was a pretty fluent reader for a five-year-old (I'd been reading for two years by then). And she recognized that listening to my classmates struggle through Dick and Jane was not the way to instill a love of learning. So she sat me in the back of the room with a 4th-grade geography book, and I got to learn about the big world, silently, while the others sounded out their syllables. I still love geography today, and I also love other cultures and travel. I've often wondered if that early exposure sparked this love in me.

I grew up in a tough neighborhood in the Bronx, a nerdy kid who didn't play sports, but absolutely loved to read and so, as a result, I got bullied a lot. I remember being harassed by one of the neighbor kids who was a bit older than me. He was swinging a metal chain in front of my face and threatening me with bodily harm while shouting anti-Jewish racist statements. A little old lady, I don't think was even five feet tall, happened to walk by carrying an umbrella. She saw what was happening and started waving her umbrella and yelling at my tormentor, who slunk away and left me alone after that. I so admired her bravery and her willingness to stick up for me even though she didn't know me!

Around that same time I spent a few weeks at a sleep-away camp one summer. Of the six boys in our bunk, three were bullies who were constantly picking on either me or Henry, the only boy in the whole camp (not just our bunk) who was weaker and less popular than me. However, the sixth kid was Dixie, who was my hero, and

still is to this very day. Dixie was our defender, always willing to take a personal risk to protect Henry or me. Interestingly enough, the three bullies never bothered Dixie. They respected him for standing up for us, and for his nonconformist refusal to engage in any taunting. He treated everyone with respect. Looking back, he was almost a Gandhi figure, even at age 11. And, I learned a deep life-long lesson from him. When the other three boys forced Henry and me to fight each other, Dixie came back to deal with the bunk, in the aftermath. He was disgusted that I'd fought Henry, with whom I had no quarrel. I realized that he was absolutely right and it would have been better to risk getting beaten than to inflict undeserved violence upon poor Henry. I learned that day that moral principles are more important than even my own physical safety, and I've never forgotten that lesson.

Never was I so consistently dependent on the kindness of strangers as I was the summer after college. I was 19 and hitchhiking across the country. Not only did I get rides from total strangers—I was given food, blankets, even an occasional place to stay for a couple of nights. This brought an end to a very cynical period in my life. The Vietnam War had been raging until the year before my trip. I started that journey with a very negative opinion of mainstream America, but I finished it knowing with absolute certainty that our country was full of people who wanted to do the right thing, and who did not share the values of the warmongers. It turned out there were plenty of very kind schoolteachers, sales people, nurses and even soldiers. In fact, it was a soldier who took me back to his military base in Kansas, gave me a shower and a hot meal, and then drove me an hour out of his way.

Some kindnesses are completely random, like the wonderful couple who pulled over to help when I happened to fall asleep at the wheel and wipe out my car on a concrete barrier one sunny Sunday afternoon. They stayed with us until the police and the tow truck came, helped us transfer all our stuff from our car to theirs, and then drove my whole family of four all the way back to our house, which was quite some distance beyond their destination. They refused payment, telling us that anyone would have done what they did (which I rather doubt). They didn't even want to give their names, though I somehow tracked them down, perhaps through their license plate, and was at least able to send them a nice thank-you note.

Other kindnesses are less random. In 1983, I joined a traveler/host home stay network called Servas, founded to encourage world peace by breaking down barriers between cultures. Servas members open their home to travelers from around the world, break bread together, and actively learn about their guests and the cultures they come from. We've hosted missionaries who lived in Szechuan, China... students from Israel and several countries in Europe... a family looking at alternative schools for their son... a well-known feminist author... activists from Mississippi... and a lot of just plain folks who would rather make a human connection than stay in a lonely motel room.

As travelers, we've been blessed to visit the owner of a language school in Greece... a decades-old commune in Denmark... an Arab cultural activist family in an Arab village within Israel (a place where almost no Jewish travelers get to go)... the Park Superintendent of Mesa Verde (a major Indian ruin in Colorado)... even the Director of National Parks for all of Guatemala (who took us to a reception with the President of that country).

Travelers come to our area for all sorts of reasons, and we do our best to connect our visitors with the people they need to know, from genealogical research to job leads. Several travelers have relocated to our area, and we were able to connect one family with friends of ours who sold them their house. In turn, we've been treated with similar kindness whenever we travel. Many hosts will go out of their way to connect us with who we need to know, or tell us which attractions we should see, and which to avoid. While there's no rule that says it has to be this way, the typical Servas visit involves dinner and breakfast for two nights. In the daytime, the travelers are expected to be out on their own, though often the host will provide guidance. There is no charge for all this kindness as it is all on a volunteer basis.

Please allow me to finish with one of my favorite kindness stories, because it was sustained over several years, was mutual, and had a terrific outcome. Many years ago I received an order for The Penny-Pinching Hedonist, my \$8.50 e-book on how to have fun cheaply, from one of my reseller partners (who got half the sale price).

I recognized the buyer's name as he's quite well-known in the Internet marketing world and has written several books. In fact, I was already on his mailing list and knew him as a person of high integrity.

When I filled his order, I committed the first kindness. I offered to send him, as a gift, my latest book at the time, which was about success through healthy business ethics. I told him that I knew who he was, read his newsletter regularly, and thought he would appreciate the book so I asked if I could send him a copy, gratis.

He loved the book and that began a colleague relationship and he gladly sent me a testimonial. Then he asked me to write an essay (for free) for his next book, which has since received more fan mail than I usually get from this sort of thing. Next, I hosted a one-hour call with him that was made available to my subscribers and the listeners to my radio show. This quiet exchange of kindnesses went on for a few years.

One day, I got an e-mail from him—we still had not met—asking if I'd like the contact information for his editor at John Wiley & Sons. Of course I said yes, and that led directly to my eighth book, *Guerrilla Marketing Goes Green*—the most important and most well-received book I've ever written. This is a book that can change lives and change the business world, and it came about because I sent a gift worth considerably more than the \$4.25 I made on the sale. I finally got to meet him when I spoke at a conference in his city, a year after the book was published.

Shel Horowitz

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CREATING A LIFE BASED ON KINDNESS

Arvind Devalia

Have you ever been so impacted by a stranger's kindness that it literally changed your life? This happened to me a few years ago which ultimately led me to a career in life coaching and which then led me to writing.

My journey into coaching began in South India, thanks to the kindness of one man that completely changed my life. As so often happens, people show us great kindness and yet are not even aware of the impact they have as a result of their kind deed. Mr. Roy, a driver working for a hotel in Chennai, South India, is one such person who made a huge difference to my life and that of many others by his dedication to duty and sheer perseverance in getting me to my destination.

Many years ago, well before I was on the life path I am now on, I visited Nirvana School in Pondicherry for the first time. This is around eighty miles from Chennai and, on a good day, the journey takes about two hours by road.

We flew into Chennai from North India and somehow got caught up in the heaviest rainfall I have ever experienced. Our planned stay at a beach hotel for a few days was curtailed and so we decided to return to North India after just a couple of days. I had been told about this remarkable charity, the Nirvana School in Pondicherry opened by a Gujarati lady from the UK, Mrs. Samani. It seemed like a good opportunity to go and visit despite the heavy rain.

So we set off early the next morning. Mr. Roy, our driver, was a jovial, wiry and diminutive man, in his splendid white attire befitting a top hotel chauffeur. We had already phoned Mrs. Samani at the school about our planned visit and she was expecting us for lunch well before mid-day. She planned to show us the school and some of the local sights around Pondicherry. Little did we know what adventures awaited us along the eighty mile journey!

Soon after leaving Chennai, the rain got heavier and, at times, we could hardly see the road in front of us. There was brown, muddy water everywhere and it seemed like the heavens were releasing some pent up fury as the rain lashed down all around us with equally ferocious streaks of lightening.

Yet Mr. Roy was completely unflappable and drove along just like it was another day's work for him, which indeed it was. I marveled at his driving confidence and awareness about the road ahead. Or, maybe it was foolhardiness.

As we drove along, the water in the road must have been about a foot deep and yet, our white Maruti car cut through the pools and lakes rapidly spouting up all around us. Three hours into our journey it seemed we could go no further. However, Mr. Roy calmly turned off the main highway and soon got us back on track via umpteen short cuts and diversions. This went on for a while and it felt as if we had hardly even left Chennai yet. Maybe Pondicherry was not in our kismet this time round.

At this point, we suggested to Mr. Roy that perhaps we should turn back and plan the trip for another day, or stop and take refuge in a temple in one of the picturesque villages. But he simply smiled and assured us he would get us to Nirvana School. He already knew how important it was for us to get to Pondicherry. Looking back now, it was almost as if he had a sense of destiny about that trip.

Over the next three hours, Mr. Roy drove us through many more angry walls of rainfall, muddy lakes and sodden villages. It was nature's fury unleashed, and wading through it all was this smiling, white clad man who just kept going and going. His persistence and faith in getting us there was reassuring and awe inspiring.

We eventually arrived in Pondicherry, over six hours after setting out from Chennai. Almost magically, the sun came out when we finally found Nirvana School. It was just like the movies, when the sun comes out at the end and all is well.

Alas, the heavy rainfall and resulting flooding over the previous twenty-four hours had meant very few children were actually attending school that day. We had a very brief tour of the school followed by a hasty lunch as we had to get back on the road to Chennai before it got too dark.

I promised Mrs. Samani that one day I would visit the school and stay longer than ninety minutes. A few years later, I did just that. It really was a pre-destined visit.

Mr. Roy, replenished after a light lunch and an even lighter snooze in the Maruti, assured us the rain was subsiding and the journey back home would be much quicker and smoother. He chose to take a slightly different route back, along a coastal road rather than the main highway, which he had conquered that morning. The scenery in the dusk was incredibly beautiful and reminded me of the many paintings my father had painted years before. This was rural India at its best and I will always remember the images of villagers in the distance returning home with their pots, firewood and pouches on their head.

The journey home back to Chennai was indeed much smoother and quicker as the rain subsided and the night drew in. We arrived back in time for dinner and Mr. Roy was still buzzing and unflappable till the end. As he said, it was nothing... all in a day's work. We could not thank him enough for taking us to Nirvana school and for what he had done for us, as who knew when we would be able to return to that part of the world again?

I didn't see Mr. Roy again on that visit to Chennai, as the next morning we left for Bangalore. Yet the impact of his kindness did not simply end with his absence. Nor did it impact only us who visited Nirvana School on that fateful day.

Mr. Roy's contribution to my life is even bigger than simply introducing me to Nirvana School. As a result of my time at the school, I was drawn to working more directly with people and first came across the concept of life coaching as a career.

This new vocation took me away from the world of IT and led me to publish four books. I began writing on the Internet surrounding topics such as how to "make it happen" in the world and in your life, thereby spreading the ripple effect of Mr. Roy's kindness even further.

Roll on a couple of years after that initial trip with Mr. Roy; My life situation allowed me to visit India for two months and I was able to fulfill my pledge to Mrs. Samani and visit Nirvana School for a much longer period. In fact, I stayed with her in Pondicherry for a month.

My journey from a hyperactive, stressed out, self-centered guy suffering all sorts of stress-related ailments to a chilled out, laid-back, worldly-wise man was almost complete during that awesome month.

The month at Nirvana School indeed felt like a month in Nirvana. I became a different person. Working with children and people seemed like my true vocation. I left heavy hearted when it was time to leave, but clear that one day I wanted to do more of this type of work of service.

I also knew I would return to Nirvana School many more times. My commitment to the school has become my own way of returning the kindness shown to me by so many others in my life and, of course, Mr. Roy, who showed how in life, ***we ought to always go the extra mile***, just like Mr. Roy so clearly demonstrated!

It is not just the children of Nirvana School that benefitted in the long term from Mr. Roy's kindness that fateful day. It is indeed the whole community and many other people in my life who have been impacted as a result of my own involvement in the school. It is the classic ripple effect of a single act of kindness affecting so many lives over many years in a positive way.

As I always say to everyone, next time you have a chance to show some kindness or go the extra mile, do so without any hesitation. You just don't know what impact your actions will have and how many lives you will change for the better. And of course, remember – there are no traffic jams on the extra mile!

So what did I learn from Mr. Roy? I used to always wonder how to make the world a better place and how to somehow make a difference to the people around me and at the same time have a fabulous life myself.

I had been asking myself this question all of my life – and Mr. Roy and Nirvana School made me realize that it was totally up to me – and indeed it is up to all of us... to make it happen.

From my childhood days in Kenya, when I used to give away my pencils to poor African children, to the many weeks I spent helping at a charity school in South India, I felt called to do something for others.

Call it destiny or fate - it seems I was born to contribute, show kindness and make a difference for others – and coaching and my writing allows me to do just that. I have come to a point where I now go around looking for opportunities to show kindness to other people!

It's well documented that by being kind, you actually benefit yourself in many ways, and every year we even celebrate **World Kindness Day**. However, you don't need a special world kindness day to show kindness to others. You can do so anytime!

Random acts of kindness are a wonderful way of making someone's day – and not only their day, but yours too! Never underestimate the impact of a single act of kindness. I still remember, after many years, the time someone stopped and helped me after my car had broken down. Since then, I have stopped on the road myself and helped stranded motorists a number of times. All because of that single act of kindness by a stranger, many years before.

Kindness is contagious. And it's a truly win/win situation – the person you are being kind to benefits through your help whilst you feel good for having helped someone. Ultimately, the world is a better place through your kindness. It's also so important to carry out your acts of kindness without expecting anything back.

So where do you begin?

To get you started, I have listed 31 ideas below – one for each day of the week.

Some of these are random and anonymous ideas. Also, most don't need any cash outlay from you, just a desire to make a difference.

Put them into practice and also create your own...

1. Send someone a hand written note of thanks.
2. Make a card at home and send it to a friend for no reason.
3. Buy a lottery ticket for a stranger.
4. Put some coins in someone else's parking meter.
5. Buy a coffee for the man on the street selling The Big Issue magazine.
6. Cut your neighbor's hedge.

7. Walk your friend's dog.
8. Give a compliment about your waiter, waitress or to their manager.
9. Send someone a small gift anonymously.
10. Stop and help someone replace their flat tyre.
11. Let someone jump the queue at the bank.
12. Pay for the drinks on the next table at a café.
13. Treat a friend to the movies for no reason.
14. Give a huge tip to someone when they least expect it.
15. Hold the train door open for someone rushing to get in.
16. Give up your seat for someone, not just an elderly person.
17. Write notes of appreciation at least once a week.
18. Talk to a homeless person and have a "normal" conversation.
19. Pick up some rubbish in the road.
20. Compliment a work colleague for their excellence.
21. Recommend a competitor to a potential client.
22. Give another driver your parking spot.
23. Give a piece of fruit to a delivery person.
24. Help an elderly neighbor carry the rubbish out.
25. Tell all your family members how much you appreciate them.
26. Leave a copy of an interesting book on a train or bus.
27. Buy an inspirational book for a friend.
28. Send a thank you note to a person who has helped you in the past.
29. Smile a lot.
30. Pay the toll or the food for the car behind you in a drive-through.
31. Clean someone's house (e.g. the elderly, sick, mother with new baby).

Another idea is to share your own unique talents with the world and offer to do things for people in your area of expertise. For example, bloggers could offer to help others with their writing or teach others how to use social media effectively.

Through serving and helping others, you yourself ultimately become more fulfilled, joyous and happy. If you are truly honest with yourself, deep down you want to be happy – and you want those around you to be happy too.

I am convinced that, ultimately, we all want the same thing, and we ought to not ever underestimate the power of the human heart. We should aim to leave the

world a better place by applying the above ideas in our lives starting TODAY! ...and watch those around us literally transform before our very eyes!

At the same time, we all wish to grow in our own lives and make the most of our time here. Kindness allows you to do just that – so why not pledge to yourself to show kindness to at least one person each day for the rest of your life? Surely that is not too much to ask for?

Please allow me to offer these final thoughts...

Remember that your life counts – and make it count.

You are unique – there is no one exactly like you on this planet – there never has been and never will be again.

Do not sell yourself short.

Do not sell the world short.

This is your life – love it, live it.

One life, one chance – grab it.

Get the life you love – and live it.

What goes around is sure to come around – so happy helping!

Arvind Devalia is a success coach, published author, speaker and a leading blogger. His main blog is at www.arvinddevalia.com/blog and he writes about how to make it happen for a better you and a better world.” Arvind’s best-selling book is “Get the Life you Love” and you can get it from www.GetTheLifeYouLove.com

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“I had a job where the higher ups constantly said, “Thank you” and congratulated hard work and/or success. I have never felt more valued and I worked harder.”

~ Tonie Cox

KINDNESS LEADS TO A RADICAL LIFE CHANGE

Steve Sjogren

“There has to be a more lucrative way to be miserable” I thought to myself.

There I was, stuck in Cincinnati, with three jobs to make ends meet and not feeling like I had any sort of real career whatsoever. It wasn't like I'd never had a clear career track. I had enjoyed teaching at the elementary level, but I'd walked away from that. Now I was questioning my decision, but let me go back a little.

I initially had plans to go into higher levels of education and possibly become a school principal, but left that track to do an internship with a Christian group located on the West Los Angeles area near UCLA. If you are a little cynical at the mention of the “C” word, don't roll your eyes just yet. These weren't those kinds of Christians. My wife Janie and I discovered pretty quickly that these were the kinds of Christians who loved. We were both influenced by New Age thinking as well as many other tangential paths along the way and were utterly convinced that anything connected with Christianity was to be thrown out as hypocrisy among other problems.

Wounded people were focused on reaching out to the spiritually disenfranchised – those who didn't fit into any sort of traditional organized spirituality. I call them the “Nons” (Non-Organized Spirituality, Non-church people Non-whatever).

These were lots of actors, musicians – many of them you'd be familiar with. Even the leaders were musicians and actors. Anyone who is an artist would have found this an incredibly stimulating atmosphere.

Several of us teamed up to start this place with just a hundred. Two years later over two thousand were coming around on weekends. Big fun! There are a lot of “nons” out there.

Janie and I left there bent on helping to spread this unique thing in other places. We came, ironically, to conservative Cincinnati, the exact opposite of West Los Angeles. We met a group of five who were interested in launching something akin to this. It was a small start, but a start nonetheless.

From early on, with just a few people, we had a vision to reach out instead of in. We said, "Let's be a completely different sort of gathering. Let's love, serve and show kindness to as many people in as many creative ways as we can and see what happens. People are used to expecting organized spirituality asking for money all the time. Let's turn things completely around. Let's lose as much money as possible. What's the worst that can happen? I guess we'll go out of business. Big deal! We're already almost out of business. We have nothing to lose! Let's spend zero energy being concerned about our longevity. Maybe we'll evaporate next week. Who knows? We'll certainly have a lot of fun doing it anyway."

Our motto became a line from a Neil Young song – "Better to burn out than to fade away..." We said to one another, "Let's die standing up instead of lying down."

We got the idea of starting our experiment by going to an economically depressed, crack neighborhood with bags of groceries, small gifts, Christmas trees and ornaments on Christmas Eve. Our thinking was that that part of town would perhaps be easier to reach out to than a middle-class neighborhood people where their basic needs were largely already met.

We had no idea what we were doing. More accurately, I as the leader had no idea what I was doing. Unfortunately for them, the others on the team were following my lead. One of my mottos is "Ready! Fire! Aim!" I'm convinced that if you ponder something a little intimidating for long you'll talk yourself right out of doing it. You'll probably over-discuss it, over-plan it then conclude it's unreasonable and likely never get around to pulling the trigger on it.

I knocked on the first door we came to. The team was carefully watching me since I was modeling to them how to show kindness in a practical way. What they didn't know was I had never done anything like this in my life! My heart was beating fast. I was sweating. I knocked and we could hear safety chains being removed. Finally a woman opened up and asked this odd assortment of large men with bags of groceries in hand, "What's up?" I blurted out the first thing that came to mind. "Are you poor?" As the words flew out of my mouth I realized I had blown it, just the same the lady was gracious. She welcomed us in and told us some of her story.

Her cupboard was bare as the poem goes. She and her 4 kids were incredibly grateful for the groceries and gifts.

That day we gave away a dozen bags of groceries, however we did use a different opening line after the first door! That first day we made a lot of mistakes. It was more of a classroom for us. Looking back I realize I was about the world's worst model of how to do this kindness stuff. Sometimes Ready, Fire, Aim backfires, but we did get off the launching pad!

In hindsight though, that day something more than just regular kindness happened. We were launched! Our hearts were like pieces of Velcro that were strongly attached to a lifestyle of kindness and generosity. We were captured by a powerful force beyond ourselves! Looking back on it now, I can see that each person in that circle of men and women was forever changed that day. Every one of us has gone on to live lifestyles of kindness and generosity.

As I see it, the overall goal of showing kindness and generosity is more than just the one-to-one connection we make with those we come in contact with. There is something profound that happens with each "Touch" that is made with the impartation of kindness, and something even bigger often happens when lots of people serve, show kindness and live generously. Maybe the term "strategic kindness" is fitting. I've been experimenting with this idea.

To my way of thinking, all of us are what I call, "Atmosphere Architects." When we show kindness to others we change them by adjusting the atmosphere around them. Think about it for a second... Everyone – literally everyone – is walking around with some sort of atmosphere around them, for better or for worse. It doesn't take much of an expert observer to see that a lot of the world's ills come out of the negative atmospheres they carry about. When we show them great measures of kindness, we adjust; we actually improve the atmosphere of their life.

A few friends and I have been experimenting with shaping the atmosphere of others in creative ways. For the two of us, as followers of Jesus, we point people to what is specifically referred to as the "kindness of God." (I will get to that notion later in the chapter.)

One kindness project I particularly like is toilet cleaning. We go into businesses two at a time with cleaning kits that include all that is required to do a bang up job of cleaning things up. The office or restaurant people ask us, “Uh..., so why are you doing this?” “We just want to show you God’s kindness in a practical way. We think that kindness is profound – that it changes people in powerful ways. Beyond that, Jesus was amazingly kind and He showed kindness by washing people’s feet. Feet are pretty clean these days, but toilets aren’t, so here we are.”

My wife Janie and I lived in Cincinnati for a number of years. That city is conservative politically, socially – in about every measurable way. Pornographer Larry Flynt, originally from Cincinnati, was essentially run out of town in the 70s due to the city’s aversion to his pornography business and commitment to rid itself of that sort of thing. Eventually he found a way to skirt the laws that had been put in place to shut him down and he soon returned to Cincinnati, and when he did he caused quite an uproar in the community at large and in the media. Janie and I watched this all taking place and thought we’d like to somehow become involved in the situation. We decided we’d dive in with both feet. We walked into the mega store with our toilet kits and approached the employees up front.

“We’re here to serve you by cleaning your toilets. Can you tell us where they are?” We would never ask, “May we serve you?” – that allows people to say “No!” Just assume they will say “Yes” by thinking positively and stating things in the affirmative.

“Uh, well they’re back there.” As we scrubbed away a couple of the employees came back to ask, “Tell us again, why are you doing this?” “We think kindness is about the most powerful force in the world. Plus Jesus cleaned feet. Yours are probably clean already, so we’ll do your toilets instead.” They asked, “What kind of Christians are you, anyway?” Our reply was, “We’re the kind that doesn’t hate you! That sounds corny, but it was true.

Here a few of profound lessons I’ve learned about kindness...

1. Kindness to a degree is serendipitous.

You can't manufacture or manipulate a profound act of kindness. We sow the seeds of kindness, but when something powerful takes place, something more than a superficial touch, the details are undoubtedly orchestrated by a Force beyond ourselves. That's not to say that we ought to delay showing kindness, waiting for some "divine" inspiration or lightning bolt from the sky, nor should we shy away from living lifestyles of kindness, blessing as many as we can.

2. None of us is naturally kind.

Some people are nice and perhaps smile a lot, but for all of us, it's just a matter of time until our level of kindness begins to diminish in the face of our own issues, trials and difficult circumstances. When that happens we typically become self-absorbed, introverted and want others to smile and show us kindness for a change.

For that reason I don't put bumper stickers on my car that indicate that I believe in the power of kindness. It's just a matter of time until some sort of driving scenario will come up and I am forced into someone's lane. The person behind me is going to think to themselves, "Yup! Those kindness people are all the same. They talk a lot about 'being kind', but when it comes down to it they are really like all the rest of us... just a bunch of schmucks." When they see this hypocrisy, they are actually pretty accurate! We actually are all hypocrites to a degree! None of us are capable of walking in kindness all the time, not in our own kindness at least. We need to receive power to walk in kindness from somewhere or someone beyond ourselves.

3. Kindness is both planned and spontaneous.

I understand the term "random acts of kindness" and encourage people to walk in a lifestyle of kindness as they look for ways to show kindness, but there is another side of the coin that is equally, if not more powerful – to commit acts of "planned kindness." If we miss either of these types of genuine kindness, we fail to catch the awesome potential each of us has, individually and collectively, to radically change our world.

4. When it comes to kindness, we ought to be more like a “pipe” than a “pan”.

Ideally kindness is something that should flow *through* us and on to others, not something we will glom onto once we’ve received it.

Once received, a pan is designed to hold onto something. In this way a pan is really an “end in itself”. It collects and then holds or contains what flows into it. A pipe is very different than a pan in that it takes in at one end and gives out at the other. Where a substance can potentially stagnate in a pan, it can never become stagnant if allowed to flow through, like it can in a pipe. If we choose to allow the kindness of God to flow through us, we allow a refilling of our tanks and it can therefore never go stagnant.

5. We don’t originate or “create” kindness; The source is beyond ourselves.

One of my favorite songs is “The Milkman of Human Kindness” by British rocker Billy Bragg. His refrain is,

“I am the milkman of human kindness”

“I will leave an extra pint”

There is certainly such a thing as “human” kindness that is real and life changing. However, at the deepest level of our souls, we all hunger for the most profound form of kindness which goes way beyond mere “human” kindness. This is the sort of kindness I’ve been experimenting with for the past couple of decades. You could call it the “Kindness of God” and it certainly the most life changing!

I’ve seen how a simple, even a rather small or seeming insignificant, gift of kindness, given at the perfect time in the right way, can be an amazing transformational change agent for the one receiving the gift. I’m interested in walking in the kindness of God every day, throughout all my days, and am committed to helping as many as possible to walk this way as well. Having said that, I now can see that so many of these kindness gifts are really serendipitous. In other words, it’s really about being at the right place at the right time, doing the

right thing. Only God can cause all these elements to come together, and effectively take place, in order to be that truly profound change agent in our world.

It's vital that we look for opportunities to make a difference wherever we can. Much has been made of that sort of "human" kindness in recent years, but that is not the most enduring or effective form of kindness. Many want to flow with kindness, but we are all limited in how much kindness we are able to give away on our own accord, or in our own power. We really need to plug into the power of kindness that is beyond ourselves.

The Bible contains a great line I find very inspiring as I seek to show kindness and generosity. "God's kindness... leads to a radical life-change" (The Message). A "**radical**" life change! I like that! That's speaking of an *enduring* change – one that goes on for the long run. It's not an easily forgotten touch that can be easily dismissed.

One last thought... Francis Thompson wrote a rather lengthy poem long ago entitled "The Hound of Heaven". I'm more a fan of shorter poems so this one doesn't appeal to me that much, but the title is dynamite. In short, he refers to the power of the Spirit to chase us for the long haul with his unrelenting faithfulness, which he calls the "Hound" of heaven. I really like that imagery! When we show others the "Kindness of God", the hound of heaven is released upon them in a profound way – in an undeniable way. God's spirit of love, mercy and kindness hounds them forever after.

Let's give away that radical life change. In the words of Steve Jobs, "let's put a 'dent' in the world that will echo forever!"

Steve Sjogren has written numerous books about the power of kindness and generosity including the bestseller, **Conspiracy of Kindness** that has sold several hundred thousand copies worldwide (see Amazon for an array of his books). His site, Kindness.com has practical articles you will find encouraging. He now lives in a medium-sized town outside of Portland, Oregon where he and friends have managed to show kindness in practical ways to every single person in town (24,000) in the past eighteen months. <http://SteveSjogren.com>

A GIFT OF JADE

Tim Moores

I had the opportunity and the extreme privilege of working with a school in China to develop a social networking web site for their phonics academy there in China. We worked for several months connecting every week or so over Skype and soon, had the site up and running. I trained the core team on-line remotely from here in Canada, but they needed me to go there and spend a three-week training session with the staff and students.

Their kindness and generosity shown me while there on their campus cannot be overstated! I was treated like royalty and once the training was complete, which itself was a great experience, they generously paid for a full-day tour of Xian City. I traveled with a dozen other people to various tourist sites, such as the famous Terra-cotta Warriors, the Great Tomb of the Qin Dynasty, the Secret Gardens as well as a number of other beautiful places.

While traveling between tourist sites the guide informed us that Xian City is also famous for its jade farms. I mentioned to the guide that my wife creates hand-made jewelry and requested that I bring back some raw jade stones if possible. As an act of kindness the driver took the entire tour out of the way to a wonderful jade farm that he was personally familiar with. I was able to purchase, at a very reasonable price, some amazing raw jade for my wife which she just loved. Beyond that, this same driver, who could not speak a word of English, told the guide that he had some jade pieces that he wanted to offer to me. This warm and kind man arranged to meet me at my hotel later that evening and brought the jade with him.

We shared a meal together and he even brought a friend from North America who was able to interpret so we could communicate. I learned much about him and his experiences there in China and at the end of the meal he presented me with these beautiful raw, cut jade pieces. When I asked how much he wanted for them, he refused to take anything in payment for his kindness and generous gift. These three pieces sit in our living room as a reminder of my wonderful trip, the many great memories as well as the many beautiful and kind people in China.

Tim Moores is the designer & editor of the **KINDNESS@Work** e-Book. He has been into Video, Graphics, Multimedia, Photography and Web Site Development for the last thirty years and has owned his own business for the last half of that. His mission is to find out what matters most to his client and then do whatever he can to empower them to make their vision a reality through multimedia. He specializes in working with you to develop or improve your web presence using a host of on-line tools, but specializes in Wordpress.

Go to his web site: www.provision-graphics.com or find Tim on [LinkedIn](#)

"Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it."

~ William Arthur Ward
Pastor, Teacher, Author and Editor

KINDNESS GIVEN HERE - NO STRINGS ATTACHED

Chef Marian

There are times when we are sitting on top of the world.... Life is good! As they say in 'While you were Sleeping', "...and for that one moment in time, everything is good and the world seems right".

Kindness showed itself to me during the early years of being in business. We were not wealthy, but we also were not struggling to buy groceries or pay our bills.

As a business owner every penny went back into the business except for the little forced savings I had done; money that was saved to landscape and put in a pool.

It was hot in Vegas. A pool wasn't a luxury. It was a necessity! And here I was, approaching the ripe young age of forty, with a husband and two children I found myself living in *Vegas* (the 1994 Earthquake in Los Angeles threw my kids out of their bunk beds I when I realized they would be sleeping with me until they went off to college, I decided to make this change.

For the first time in my life I was able to purchase a home. Amazingly enough it was a *new* home. I was so happy to have my own space, not having to change locations year-to-year and for once, to *not* be looked at as a "non-permanent and transient". But to own something large and luxurious AND *new*.... well, that was *something*, in my world at the time. So I would say I was pretty much in "grateful" mode.

In the process of that relocation, I became open to meeting new people and making new friends. I owned my own companies and had people that worked for me, some people that I actually took with me when we moved from Beverly Hills to Las Vegas and I had a handful of friends I left behind in California that provided me with pretty good telephone support. So, I busied myself with creating a Wine Taster's Club, which met regularly to do "tastings" and "food & wine pairing" (my first love). I also worked on my company business, going into the office every day, taking care of the kids as well as my husband's needs in my "down time".

In caring for everyone else's needs, I barely considered that I actually had needs of my own. Didn't realize it then, but I know it now. There should have been *more* "down time" just for me!

I think the first time I acknowledged I too had needs, was when I opted to help a new friend (I will call her Camila). Camila had come across the country with three small kids in tow. You can only imagine why a charming, Latin, middle-aged woman with a strong Spanish accent would pick up and leave her husband in the middle of the night. I'll tell you why... her husband was a drunk and he beat her. To hear Camila tell her story was the saddest thing I've ever heard! She accepted the beatings. One night, drunker than usual, he finished beating her and started hitting the kids. Camila knew what she had to do. Later that same night, as he lay drunk and passed out, she quickly and quietly packed a few things, loaded them and her kids into the car and without any idea of where she was going they hit the road.

I was pretty impressed with Camila. She was a tough cookie! When she first arrived, she marched into one of the big hotels in Vegas and told them she was great at sales, was hired immediately and for two years she definitely was a great 'closer'. One day, in the "right to work state" where people can fire you for *any* reason at all, she was told "Sorry, you just aren't young enough to work in this hotel. OUR girls need to be younger and look cuter in a miniskirt". Camila was let go and that was that! She was resourceful, though. Once again, her tenacity was just incredible. She was a very good networker that kept a constant watch on the upcoming competition. Without missing a beat, she called an Indian tribe that had recently opened a casino in the Midwest and she got hired immediately.

When she called to tell me she was moving, she mumbled something about having just enough money to fill the car with gas in order to get there. She invited my family over for a sad goodbye where we had a lovely dinner, lots of laughter, and talked about the good things yet to come. As we went to leave, I handed her what I called a "Good Bye and good Luck" letter, asking her not to open it until I was gone. Told her I might start crying.

When I got home I received a call. It was Camila, crying. She was overwhelmed that someone would be willing to sacrifice their own savings, all that they had... for her.

She was at a loss as to what to say or do to express her deep gratitude! She now had the funds to feed her kids for a couple of weeks, money for hotels as well as first, last and security on a new place to live. I fought with my husband (now ex-husband) to give her that money, without any strings attached or expectation of payback. I simply *needed* to do it for ME! It was truly what I felt in my heart was the right thing to do. And for once, I put my foot down!

Years later, I called her to let her know that we were travelling through the area on a cross-country trip and she invited us to her home. Seeing Camila again was great! She had become very well-established and the kids were all doing really good too. She excitedly rummaged through her purse to find an envelope and handed it to me. It was a total repayment of the money given. I thanked her, but without blinking quickly reminded her that it was entirely meant to be a gift. Of course, she insisted I take it.

I asked 'Have you started a college fund for the kids yet'? As I looked around at her home, I could tell she was just managing to pay all her bills and had little left over for much else. She looked at me like I was being unfair to expect that, to which I quickly replied, "Well you do now!" and I handed that money right back to her. Again, tears and smiles all around!

You might say I was kind - that I was on the "giving" end of that stick, but you can be certain that in the end I got way more out of this transaction than she did! She gave me something unexpected: real joy, and that deep joy bubbles up within me every time I think of her. I am proud of her and now? I am proud of me too!

There's an even more amazing ending to this story. Decades later, after my spouse gambled away all our savings including my retirement money, she called to "check in" and I told her what I was going through. It wasn't huge, but within weeks a check appeared in my mailbox, along with what really meant a lot to me: a totally supportive letter saying how she just knew I would get myself back on my feet - that I had "made it" once and I could make it again, and hoped that the money she sent would help out. There's that word "JOY" again! Kindness calls in Joy, for sure!

Kindness! Don't give to get... You'll get way more than you might expect!

Chef Marian has followed her cooking passion for decades. She's created fundraisers, as a member of *The American Institute of Wine & Food (AIWF)*. She has hosted a cooking website teaching people how to cook and pair wine in Los Angeles and continues filmed cooking classes in San Diego, Food & Wine Tasting Dinners, working with the chef to create the menu. Restaurants use her to "re-do" their menus to healthier, more flavorful offerings. She also produces, directs and edits videos of her Cooking Shows. Her vision is to make 'Chef Marian' the most popular Internationally recognized Female Celebrity Chef and Brand Name, creating great "content" for television and putting great product on the shelves under the Chef Marian brand.

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“Wear a smile and have friends; wear a scowl and have wrinkles. What do we live for if not to make the world less difficult for each other?”

~ George Eliot 1819-1880, Novelist

HOW KINDNESS CHANGED MY LIFE!

Mari-Lyn Harris

There are so many ways that kindness has changed or affected my life. Most of my life I have had people believe in me more than I could ever believe in myself. Many times they have been teachers who saw my capabilities and talents and encouraged me. One of them was a Phys-Ed teacher who wanted me to be on the track and field team at high school. I couldn't because my family was moving to a different city, but she even arranged for a host family so I could participate. I always dreamed of playing basketball on her team.

Another special person was Don Patterson, my accounting instructor in college, who would take extra time to mentor me and help me to understand accounting. Numbers were not my thing. He would just say, "keep believing in yourself and you'll get it".

In 1999, I was going through a rough time. I had lost my job, I was burned out, was completely exhausted and I had one month to be out of my apartment. A friend of mine suggested that I just surrender, let everything go. She had done this herself and her life started to turn around. By surrendering, I was just letting go of my insatiable need to be in control, allowing God, Universe or Spirit (whatever you want to call it) to intervene in my life. One day I just asked for help. I wasn't used to "being". I've always been "doing" or "fixing". One day, after asking for help, my guides came to me and said, "Kindness!" I said, "What? A kindness Conference... really? What's that?" I had never heard of that before. I started to question the answer I received when asking for help. Then I remembered that I had, in fact, asked for help. This WAS my answer! Since I never heard of a Kindness Conference before, I figured I could produce one, so I asked God to put the people in my life who could help me effectively pull it off.

I left Vancouver, BC and moved back to Alberta and while in Alberta I connected with a small committee of people who were organizing themselves as a **R.A.K.** or **Random Act of Kindness**. They had recently experienced a random act of violence in a local school. Debbie Riopel and Colleen Ring wanted to turn this violence into kindness. Every year February 9-14th became **Random Acts of Kindness Week**.

The children at the schools began to do projects that taught them to be kinder to each other, in other communities and to their environment. As I worked alongside of them, I asked them if they would help me to bring kindness to the workplace. I started to form committees to produce the **Kindness To Colleagues** conferences. The first conference was launched on February 14, 2000. In between work, I would go and talk to people about this event and asked if they would like to participate as a sponsor. Brian Sherrington, who had a printing company, was one of my biggest supporters. As the big day approached the excitement grew among the people I gathered for the event. We were in for a very inspirational time! Following what proved to be a very successful event, the various speakers got together to celebrate each other's contribution. Everyone who attended had their hearts filled with ideas and inspiration! A greater cooperation and deep connection began to develop in newly formed relationships. At the end of the event Brian asked me if I was ready to do another one. I said, "are you in?" He said, "For sure!" and I said, "Okay, let's go!"

Brian was a mentor for me, he believed in what I was doing, and the philosophy of having a kinder workplace of sharing and spreading kindness, even beyond the work place. Brian had found that there was less friction when his staff work together, and more open communication was happening when they were encouraged to be kind to one another.

Kindness has been very generous to me personally, by people who have believed in me when I couldn't or didn't see my talents. I have been honored to be in the presence of many people who I've worked with on the Kindness Conferences, the volunteers who gave up their time and the speakers who knew that their message needed to be delivered.

In 2001, I founded the **Kindness Hero Awards**. These awards are given out each year on November 13, **World Kindness Day**. By accepting nominations from people who wanted to show their appreciation, to acknowledge their peers in the categories of Workplace, Community and People (Individuals). It is amazing how many people just want to show their appreciation and have the opportunity to say, thank you! Employees want their workplaces to be recognized and have a way to communicate to their employers, "WOW! You made a difference in my life!"

When developing Heart@Work in 2001, I was promoting, marketing and facilitating “kindness” programs in the workplace. Most of the companies back then seemed to not care too much about “being kind”. The economy was tough, more people were looking for work than there were jobs available, and so most employers didn’t really think they had to do anything different to attract workers. On the other hand, not-for-profit organizations as well as employees knew things definitely had to change! Non-profits were anxious to get volunteers, wanted to keep the volunteers they already had, and therefore saw the benefits of being genuinely kinder. They were very open to finding ways to attract and keep volunteers in their organizations.

Of the many managers and owners that I spoke to about adopting “kindness” in their businesses felt this would mean that they would have define and make strategic changes in how they treated their employees. Of course, they couldn’t fathom the difference such a simple thing like “kindness” would make the workplace.

Back in 1999, when I was “surrendering” everything, I had to learn to also be kinder to *myself*. I started to say to people, “Hey, quit beating up ‘my friend’ – ME!” I became my own best friend, collaborating and staying connected to God, and I began to learn to be kinder... to me.

Kindness ripples out to some unknown place and into people’s hearts. The movie “Pay it Forward” tells the best story in this regard and shows exactly how it all works. Another movie was called the “Ripple Effect”, how when one person is kind to someone else the Ripple Effect carries that kindness out into the world.

One of the girls, Laura who worked with me on the first **Kindness Conference**, was in charge of the food for the day. She came to me the day of the event to tell me she couldn’t do the job that she signed up for. She didn’t feel she had the confidence and she felt there weren’t enough volunteers to help her. I simply encouraged her to do it anyway, that I believed in her, and that she just had to ask for help when she needed it. Later on, after the conference, she came to me to thank me because I didn’t let her bow out. She learned that she was really a leader and gained confidence in herself through this situation.

We all need supporters and encouragers in our lives to help us to keep going! Know that when you are kind, or just believe in someone, the return you receive for your kindness is immeasurable! It was as much me, as it was her that reaped the benefit of helping Laura to believe in herself. It was very gratifying to know that I was able to take someone to another level in their self-confidence and empower them to believe in themselves! Most times you will never know how you have helped someone, but what does it matter. Sometimes you just feel good about *yourself* - it's a wonderful, "natural" high. Brian Sherrington used to say to me, "If you are feeling bad, go out and help someone else. It will make you feel better". It's so true!

Over the years most IT companies get it. They have proven that when they treat their employees well, are easier to get along with, communications are clearer, there is better team work and everyone tends to be happier. As a result they stay longer, produce more, they provide better customer service and the company prospers!

Not only sales, but new relationships come through being kind to people. If you use kindness more often, you'll have better relationships. Kindness has been my philosophy in how I live my life and created a company to be better for ALL concerned... better *profits*, better *people*, a better *community*!... a better WORLD!

Kindness doesn't mean that you give it *all* away and not be kind to yourself. I know for sure, that for me, this is the hardest lesson to learn. Kindness also means you stand up for yourself. Be counted! Like voting, changing your mind about an opinion or option you have, being able to say, NO!, perhaps letting something go just so you can be healthy, or you decide certain battles just aren't worth it.

I had an opportunity to work for a non-profit organization and one of the things it really needed was to be promoted and marketed in the community and to get the city on board. It was an equine center where they offered community services such as boarding of horses along with classes, trail rides, and even offered riding lessons to disabled children, helping them cope with their disabilities. Unfortunately, I quickly recognized that this organization was unhealthy itself, unable to even be kind to its own staff. So, there was no point in promoting it to the community, because I would be communicating that it's okay to be unkind, negative and would have been spreading an unhealthy mindset into the community.

I began by talking to the staff to discover what they felt were the problems and what they would like to see changed. One of their biggest problems was the lack of cooperation. Harmful and negative gossip was rampant. Initially I wasn't bold enough to tell them not to gossip, so what I said at a staff meeting was, "Why not begin spreading GOOD things about each other. When you see someone doing something good, spread compliments and accolades."

Well, soon boarders began appreciating the staff, they started to work together and people started to volunteer and wanted to help each other. I remember I even had a board member come to me to gossip about someone, and I would just ask them, "did you actually witness this, or did someone tell you about it? No?... Well then, it's just hearsay and I don't want to listen to it and neither should you!" "What do you mean? I'm NOT gossiping!" was their response. Everyone, including board members, had to be encouraged to quit gossiping about others in the organization. It was amazing to me how some people were so addicted to gossiping. However, kindness began to be spoken and shared, and this simple change in attitudes was able to turn-around this organization in only three months. It was simply amazing! It was one of my greatest achievements there.

I have come to believe, to trust and know that kindness can, in fact, change the world! My dream and personal goal is to see world-wide kindness. If we each performed at least three acts of kindness every day, if we all stopped the gossiping and only shared positive things regarding others and if we could quit reacting to peoples' negative comments about us and others... WOW! What a global impact these simple things could make! Hey, take a minute to breathe the spirit of that concept! Let's start by surrendering and just being kinder to ourselves and then there will be more room for others to join in.

Mari-Lyn Harris of Heart@Work Productions represents heart-centered entrepreneurs and helps them deliver their message to the world. Through inspirational talks, marketing, social media, promotions with collaboration, cooperation & masterminding she connects you to greater possibilities.

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Join her [Kindness@Work](#) Facebook group.

Go ahead,
Spread a little kindness,
...and watch the world around you change!



KINDNESS@Work

V.1.3

*“When, in this one world, among one humanity, one positive gesture
or one helpful act, is performed -- and then repeated by others...
anything is possible!”*

~ author unknown

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