

Kindness Rules

Russell Delman December 2013

So much in life seems complex, yet the important issues are often very simple. For example, who does not want the world to be a kinder place? Does anyone say: "I would like my grandchildren living in a world that is less kind? Do you think there is any person in Africa, Asia, South America, New Guinea- anywhere on our small planet- who has this thought?

Remarkably, there is an absolutely foolproof way to create more kindness in the world- BE KINDER!

As a child growing up in New York City, my parents would warn me against offering kindness to strangers. Implicit was the message that if you are kind people will take advantage of you. Many of us absorbed a harmful, erroneous message like that about the dangers of kindness: "if you are kind to the wrong people you will be hurt", "kindness is weakness", "don't be foolish (childish, naive, stupid...), grow up already". How strange that our culture assumes that being kind means that we can not also be wise/careful/observant/discerning, etc.

The Dalai Lama is often quoted as saying "Kindness is my religion". His complete quote is:

"This is my simple religion. There is no need for temples; no need for complicated philosophy. Our own brain, our own heart is our temple; the philosophy is kindness."

How easy it is to offer a bit more kindness in our everyday interactions. Observing the needs of the people around you creates many opportunities for "random acts of kindness". Little actions make a big difference. A smile, a kind word, a held door, a bag carried: our hearts lighten when we find ways of caring for our world. Offering a kind thought or prayer for someone who is struggling will help you feel more connected and perhaps have a positive influence simply through your presence.

IMAGINE: you are the center of a universe and you are the main arbiter of the rules, attitudes and the overall atmosphere within that universe. All the people that you meet, all the situations that you are living in are instances of your universe. Imagine that by choosing to offer small acts of care you cultivate greater kindness in the universe in which you live. Could it be that your "atmosphere" will actually influence the attitudes, feelings and actions of the people in your universe?

Try this experiment. Over the next two weeks test the following hypothesis: "My experience of living is enhanced enormously and not diminished in anyway when I commit myself to small, extra, unexpected acts of kindness everyday." Do an

empirical study and please send me your results.

One of the twentieth centuries most erudite and creative thinkers, the writer, social philosopher and explorer of consciousness Aldous Huxley said it so clearly:

“It’s a little embarrassing that after 45 years of research and study, the best advice I can give to people is to be a little kinder to each other”.

Imagine growing a kinder world together!