

A glimpse at the power of kindness

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HOMEFRONT
CONSTANCE
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"Human kindness has never weakened the stamina or softened the fiber of a free people. A nation does not have to be cruel to be tough."

Franklin D. Roosevelt

Open your local newspapers or seek online current news and you will be bombarded by violence, cruelty and numerous ways people mistreat each other, not only adults but also children. Our children are bullying and killing other children. How can we find the light out of this darkness and move more toward caring for others?

Khalil Gibran stated "Tenderness and kindness are not signs of weakness and despair, but manifestations of strength and resolution."

If we look at a normal day, most of us relate to many people. Some with physical pain, some heartache, and some are confronting financial stressors. Do we walk by or stop and listen? Do we offer care to someone in physical pain? Do we comfort someone who has experienced a significant loss? Do we find ways to give to those less fortunate than ourselves? As Plato said, "Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a harder battle."

Alissa Parker, for example, described herself in a recent Oct. 3, 2013, article as a typical mother. She often hurried her three daughters off to school in the morning. She was challenged by the regular routines of getting children to eat breakfast, to get dressed and to remember their school books. Alissa described the stress most mothers experi-

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ence when getting their children off to school in a timely fashion. She sometimes yelled to prod them along, until one day she realized she didn't want her day, or her daughters' days, to begin so negatively. She chose to create a more pleasant way to start her morning. Alissa's daughter died in the Sandy Hook tragedy. When she reflects back to her last morning with Emilie, she feels blessed that she had made the changes and her daughter's last moments and her last memories were "filled with love and kindness."

Kindness with ourselves and our families are so important, as well as our culture. Can we integrate kindness into our culture and community more? Of course we can. Mark Twain said, "Kindness is a language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see." Kindness is the one gift we all own and can share. Some people belong to communities where their faith or religion encourages them to have compassion and emphasizes the spiritual significance of kindness. Some communities encourage "Random acts of kindness." The Pittsburgh Post Gazette frequently publishes examples of people helping others by offering transportation to those in need, returning lost items that are usually stolen and finding other meaningful ways to be kind to strangers. In publishing these kind community deeds, the Gazette is encour-

aging and reminding others to follow suit.

In Northern London, one community has engaged in a large-scale endeavor titled "The Kindness Project Library." This project is run by volunteers and publishers and others have donated more than 100,000 books. These books are available to the public with no expectation of return. The goal is to give back to the community, while ensuring reading is available to all.

The goal is to move our culture beyond the underpinnings of me-ism, materialism and narcissism toward healthier solutions. Preferably we will choose human kindness within ourselves, our families and communities.

In summary, what if kindness were more pervasive in our culture? What if we, as individuals, internalized its value more? Shaped our families by it? And, chose to treat people in our communities more kindly? I think we would all find, in the end, the strength one gets from being kind is that of growing in confidence and in connections with others.

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