The Value of
Kindness

Even small acts make a big difference

BY CAROL L. BROOKS, SR/WA

With unstable current events, financial challenges, difficult property owners and the pressures of simply managing work life and home life, you may be feeling excessively drained and unable to give any more of yourself to others. It's tough to extend ourselves when our culture chimes, "Go big or go home." You may not totally agree with this mantra, but you've certainly heard it throughout your life. And because of these high expectations, we put greater stress upon ourselves. We end up believing that if we can't meet super-human goals, why try at all? But there is a much healthier perspective to take on instead.

The best way to change our behavior is by choosing to take small steps. In an effort to *go big or go home* with one big step, we tend to lose our focus and sense of inner balance. Instead, start small with a smile, a thoughtful deed or a helping hand. After all, simple forms of generosity can rejuvenate and uplift your own attitude. Remember, kindness begets kindness. When you lend a hand, another hand reaches out to help you. It's a boomerang effect, which can make a big difference in changing our own disposition. Simply put, when it comes to kindness, even the smallest amount can make an impact.

A Simple Act

Early for a client meeting in San Diego, I decided to stop into McDonalds for breakfast. I sat at a table by a window that overlooked Horton Plaza, a massive shopping center. On the lawn area that graced the entrance of the mall, homeless people were gathering up their bedding and meager belongings. I was saddened for their condition and wished I had buckets of money to help them. But since I didn't, I opted for what many may do in this situation—I decided to do nothing.

But I soon recognized that perhaps I didn't need buckets of money to help make a stranger's day better. The *go big or go home* mentality doesn't apply when it comes to kindness. As I reflected on this, I watched an elderly employee mopping the restaurant floor, picking up trash and straightening tables and chairs. I noticed his tanned, weathered skin and hair that looked as though it was combed with his fingers. I wondered if he lived at one of the rescue missions sprinkled throughout downtown.

I knew I didn't have buckets of money to help him, but I could do something small and immediate. I purposefully walked toward the trashcan that would lead me across his path. I stopped and asked If I could tell him something. He twirled around and fear was planted on his face. I was taken aback by his defensive reaction and wondered if his world was filled with strangers who had ill intent. Nonetheless, I squared my shoulders and smiled as I said, "I just want to tell you what a nice job you're doing. You've got this place sparkling." His wide smile exposed several missing teeth and his harsh expression instantly softened. His eyes twinkled as he nodded repeatedly and said, "Thank you, Miss."

Applying the Lesson

That smile was a gift that I will long remember. That simple act of pushing kindness forward taught me that I don't have to *go big* and I don't have to *go home*. I can start small and make a big difference in someone else's life.

What can you do to push kindness forward? It takes just a second to give someone a pat on the back, say an encouraging word or give your thanks. Perhaps the next time you meet with the property owner, you may consider how to push kindness forward by active listening—listening to their entire story so that you'll gain enough insight into the owner's concerns and provide them with an appropriate solution. Reach out to others with kindness—don't rob them—or yourself—of the gift of pushing it forward. ✪

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