

## KINDNESS IS EVERYWHERE

Human kindness is a huge force in this world. Unfortunately, stories about kindness are not the norm in our everyday lives. What we hear about more than anything else is disaster, corruption, crime, disease and devastation. Sometimes when I watch the six o'clock news I feel like I'm being assaulted. That's when I turn it off.

If you look at things on a global scale as they are presented through the media, it can seem like kindness is slowly being sucked right out of the human experience. It isn't! It's alive and well. We just need to decide to see it. Sometimes that can be difficult, I know. When life has dealt a harsh blow, it can be awfully hard to see the goodness in the world.



Every crisis, challenge or hardship brings gifts that are meant to enrich our lives. It takes time and effort to see those gifts, and to accept and appreciate them, but they are there. They are ALWAYS there waiting to be discovered. When bad things come into your life, at first you don't really want to believe they have gifts for you, but they do.

In my life, crisis, challenge and hardship took the form of a critical illness that led to permanent paralysis. For a very long time I wasn't able to find anything good about that. Now I can honestly tell you that the gifts were many. One of the ones I am most thankful for is that my eyes were opened to the immense capacity human beings have for kindness and compassion.

During my recovery, some of the simplest and sweetest acts of kindness I have ever known were bestowed on me by family, friends and strangers alike. Millions of people around the world have experienced the outpouring of goodwill in a time of crisis. Perhaps you have too.

When I began the reality of living in the world with a disability, the kindness didn't stop. I just stopped seeing it. I didn't want to see it. In fact, I resented it. Kindness was extended to me time and time again, and I routinely rejected it, quite often with contempt.

Because my disability is so visible, kindness often came to me in the form of help, and I did not want to be a person who needed help. I didn't want to be the person who had gone through the trauma of losing her mobility. I didn't want to accept what had happened to me.

I didn't know it, but I was grieving for all that I had lost. My grief feelings, with anger taking centre stage, were a barrier to kindness. Perhaps you have experienced something similar in dealing with the effects of a crisis that changed your life.

The road to healing ultimately leads to an acceptance that we don't always get to pick what happens in life. It leads to the discovery that happiness does not depend on external circumstances and we are not slaves to the things that happen to us.

It's a long slog working through the effects of trauma to get to the place where you can decide to see kindness. But as you heal, you dissolve the shield of anger and build yourself and your life back up again. Then you are more able to make a choice about how you want to see the world.

You can choose to shift your perspective and believe that kindness is in people's hearts and therefore kindness is in the world. You can shift your attitude and be willing to see it. You can shift your attention and actually notice it.

When I was finally able to do that, I saw kindness everywhere. It can come in when healing opens the heart. It can be welcomed and cherished. More than that, it can be reciprocated. It heals not just by being received but by being given too.

Kindness begets more kindness. That is its hidden power. That is what makes it such a huge force in this world. Not only is kindness everywhere, it's immeasurable and it's unstoppable!

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