

Hope for the uprooted woman



ALWAYS *be a*
little
Kinder *THAN*
necessary.

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What the World Needs Now—Kindness by Ann Kelley

If you've ever uprooted and moved to a new town, you've probably experienced some isolation and loneliness. Most likely, you were motivated to make friends and get to know your way around out of a desire to make this new place feel like home.

But you don't have to be new to your community to feel disconnected and isolated. In cities across the country, gone are the days of community connection and interdependence. Thirty-five percent of Americans over 45 are chronically lonely. Only 8 percent of Americans report having meaningful conversation with their neighbors. Only 32 percent of Americans say they trust their neighbors.*

For many of us, the extent of our interaction with our neighbors is a wave and a smile when we see them at the mailbox or driving by. Serious illness or death could visit our neighbor's home and we may never know! Opportunities for acts of kindness are right under our noses, if we will be alert and watching. To be sure, kindness begins at home, but don't stop there. Watch for opportunities to show kindness and compassion to those in your neighborhood and community.

A call to kindness

Whether it's rolling your neighbor's trash can to the curb or serving at a food bank, acts of kindness are the first steps to fostering a more caring community. Acts of kindness can open channels of communication and connection. Plus, **research has proven that well-being and happiness is increased in the person who goes out of his or her way to be kind.** And, by the way, the more personal the act, the better you feel.

Keep reading to learn ways to be kind to yourself (a good place to begin), accept people for who they are, and to be inspired by two organizations that are addressing the needs of individuals and schools in creative ways.

*www.ted.com/talks/david_brooks_the_lies_our_culture_tells_us_about_what_matters_and_a_better_way_to_live

Start by Being Kind to Yourself by Susan David

A good way to become more loving and compassionate toward yourself is to look back on the child you once were. After all, you didn't get to choose your parents, your economic circumstances, your personality type, or your body.

Recognizing that you had to play the hand you were dealt is often the first step toward showing yourself more warmth, kindness, and forgiveness. You did the best you could under the circumstances and you survived. And you are doing the best you can under these circumstances right now.

I invite you to think of yourself for a moment as that hurt child you once were running up to you, now as the adult you. Would you mock the child? Demand an explanation? Tell her that it was her fault and say, "I told you so." No. No, you wouldn't. You would take that young, upset child in your arms and comfort her. Why should you treat the adult you any less compassionately?

www.ted.com/talks/checking_in_with_susan_david_self_compassion_for_the_self_critical

Bloom provides inspiration as you seek to grow and thrive during times of life change. Read past issues at JustMoved.org

Two Simple Questions for Cultivating Self-Kindness by Cindy Bunch And How Asking Them Also Grows Empathy for Others



“Notice when you are bugged.” That statement stopped me short as I was reading. The things that bug me can form a low hum in my brain throughout a day. They can spoil—or threaten to spoil—the other lovely moments of the day.

I found these words in the manuscript for Gem and Alan Fadling’s book *What Does Your Soul Love?* in a section where they were describing how we place ourselves in a state of openness before God.

I took that statement and made it into a question. Then I decided to make it a part of a daily practice. I would think about the past day and write down the answer to just two questions:

1. What’s bugging you?

2. What’s bringing you joy?

Creating that simple practice has been a great help to me. As I lean into it, I see where I am hooked into negative thought patterns about myself or others, and what I need to let go of. I also see what brings me joy. And each day brings a new opportunity to lean into that as well. The more I understand about what’s bugging me and free myself of that, the more I am able to embrace opportunities for joy. It’s part of what I am learning about being kind to myself.

The ways that we talk to ourselves about the things that are bugging us are a part of a practice of self-kindness. What do I say to myself when what’s bugging me is that I escalated a small matter into a situation where I yelled at my husband? How do I process those moments when

I am passed over at work? Or when a friend makes a hurtful comment? Or even something as mundane as getting stuck in an hour-long customer service call with no satisfaction?

As we learn new ways of dealing with the moments of difficulty in each day, we make space for the moments of joy to take greater hold of us.

Self-Kindness Leads to Empathy Toward Others

Scripture tells us to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31). And we may have even heard it noted in a sermon that we should not neglect ourselves as we care for others. But often that is simply said in passing as we focus on being of service to the world. Giving our attention to what it means to love ourselves may feel selfish. And yet even Jesus took time away from the crowds he was teaching to pray (Luke 5:16).

Another benefit of this increased self-kindness is that when we are tender with ourselves, we cultivate a greater tenderness and empathy toward others. It is a fruit of goodness to ourselves that we increase in goodness toward our neighbor. Anne Lamott describes how she learned from others who were getting sober that “extending ourselves to others would help us stay sober and sane.” The pattern of getting a sponsor in AA follows this principle. But then Lamott continues: “They also wanted us to extend ourselves to our own horrible selves, at our most ruined, to speak gently to ourselves, get ourselves a lovely cup of tea.” For many of us, offering grace to ourselves is harder than extending grace to others.

These questions have made me more aware of the things I hold on to each day. The things that pull me down. The things that keep me from noticing that God is near and is constantly drawing me in.

Excerpt from Be Kind to Yourself by Cindy Bunch.

Don't Judge a Book by Its Cover by Susan Miller

As followers of Christ, we are compelled to love our neighbors and live in community with them. We are to demonstrate the love of Christ in ways our neighbors can see through our actions, feel through our behavior, and hear through our words. Throughout the New Testament, Jesus demonstrates this over and over again through His actions and words. Our role is to simply bear witness to God's truth in word and deed. Only God's Spirit, however, can compel someone to receive the message of Christ.

When I read Cyndi's story below, I was reminded of how often I have prejudged and stereotyped people by their outer appearances, rather than their hearts. Oh, Lord, forgive me. May I always build a bridge of connection with love and acceptance rather than a wall of judgment.

The neighborhood we moved into was wonderful. All of our neighbors greeted us with kindness and welcoming arms. We spent many hours at the playground together with our children. I was convinced that at least a few of them had to be Christians, but after being more exposed to their lifestyles, I discovered that none of them was Christian.

If I had met my neighbors and had noticed their concealed tattoos and body piercing, or heard some of their vulgar language and music, or realized that we were the only ones that didn't drink alcohol, I think I would have locked myself and my young impressionable children in our apartment, never to see sunlight again.

Excerpt from *After the Boxes Are Unpacked* by Susan Miller, Founder and Executive Director of Just Moved Ministry.



However, God covered my eyes and did not allow me to see this right away. He allowed me to see friendly, caring people who loved their children and wanted what was best for them.

A few women persuaded me to go to the gym with them, and I began to love and care for them—and enjoy their company. They soon learned about my walk with Christ and, though they might not have agreed, they respected my faith and did not ban me from the group. This was good because I wanted to share Christ with all of them and sow a seed in each of their lives.

God began to open my eyes to my own prejudice and stereotyping. If God had not covered my eyes, I would have prejudged these women who, without prompting, had ministered to me, a newcomer.

I hope that despite all the stereotypes, taboos, and prejudices in our society, I will always remember to look at people as God's creations and souls He wants to claim.—Cyndi

May you and I strive to look at our neighbors through the eyes of Jesus. Remember Jesus' command to "love your neighbor as yourself" (see Luke 10:27).

15 Ways to Be Kinder Than Necessary by Charles Swindoll

1. Be gentle and patient with an angry person.
2. Express appreciation.
3. Gladden the heart of a child.
4. Find the time to keep a promise.
5. Make or bake something for someone else.
6. Speak kindly to a stranger.
7. Enter into another's sorrow.
8. Smile. Laugh a little more.
9. Take a walk with a friend.
10. Kneel down and pat a dog.
11. Lessen your demands on others.
12. Apologize if you were wrong.
13. Turn off the television and talk.
14. Give a soft answer even though you feel strongly.
15. Encourage an older person.

Condensed from *The Finishing Touch* by Charles Swindoll

More Love Letters

Encouragement for people in need around the world



Hannah Brencher moved to New York City to follow her dreams. What she ended up encountering was overwhelming loneliness that would end up becoming a diagnosis for depression.

To cope with the sadness, she started writing and leaving letters across the city for others to find. She blogged about leaving those letters behind and asked a simple question to her readers: Do you need a love letter? I will write you one. No questions asked.

Hannah writes, “Overnight, I watched as my inbox filled with requests from people all over the world. Some of the saddest, bravest and most beautiful stories I’d ever encountered. I put my pen to paper and began writing.”

After nearly 400 love letters, the idea for More Love Letters was born. Hannah describes her team and volunteers as “a dedicated pack of heart-on-sleeve individuals who believe in the power of words. We use our words for good. We build others up. We come together as a community to show others just how much they matter.”

More Love Letters has sent thousands of love letters to individuals around the world who are nominated by a family member, friend, or loved one. Every month the stories of those who are chosen are posted on the website. You’re invited to read them, pull out your best letter writing essentials, and pen a letter from the heart to one (or all) of the individuals. At the end of each month, all the love letters from hundreds of strangers are bundled up and given to the unsuspecting person.

Learn more at www.MoreLoveLetters.com

School Connect

Creating community support for the local school

Founder and CEO, Tracey Beal, started School Connect as a way to connect schools to the community—building a village of support around them—so that every child has the resources and connections they need to reach their potential.

School Connect connects, trains, and coaches those who want to build strong, strategic partnerships that support local schools. In Arizona, School Connect raised \$1.5 million to purchase 10,000 computers for schools and raised another \$230,000 from businesses, faith communities, and community partners to deliver critically needed office supplies to schools. The clinical mental health and faith leadership community has also come together to support schools and families in meeting the socio-emotional needs of children.

Every year the schools celebrate Love Our Schools Day. Businesses and members of the community improve their local school by painting, cleaning, gardening, preparing crafts, or creating care packages for teachers!

School Connect will provide a **Love Our Schools Day Road Map** to any interested school or community for simple steps to success!

Learn more at www.SchoolConnectAZ.org

