Caring in the Classroom

(Original)

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At my school, everyone excels at something. Whether it be speed skating, the saxophone, or Spanish, each of my classmates have certain aspects they are expected to be good at. A few months ago, I realized how damaging this environment is. When my class was asked to raise our hands if we felt safe sharing our insecurities, not a single hand went up. The expectation of excelling had created stress and fear in the classroom, though at the time I did not know how to help.

A few months ago, my friend and classmate had a mental breakdown. She felt like a fish out of water, but what struck me was that she could not specify why. After supporting her however I could, I realized that the key to creating a safe environment is to promote kindness.

All my classmates, including me, had been so caught up in ensuring we lived up to others' expectations, that we had forgotten the importance of a safe environment. It was then that I started my quest to bring kindness to my class, and made it a priority to actively be kind to others.

I started with something relatively simple: giving up my seat on the bus. I was occupying a convenient seat near the front door of the bus. After a few stops, an elderly couple shuffled on. I quickly vacated my seat and stood out of the way. The student sitting next to me noticed I had moved and got up as well. I felt surprised that someone would notice my small act of kindness and follow suit. Following this event, I was motivated to perform more acts of kindness, especially towards my class. I thought and still think that if my actions display kindness, then others will be more inclined to do the same.

As it neared the end of the school year, my teacher notified us that we would watch a movie the next class. I then had an idea to remind my classmates of kindness-I would buy them snacks to eat during the movie! Simple as it sounds, this was not effortless for me. I manage my money well, never wasting a cent on unnecessary spending, even though my parents are able to fund all my purchases. I had always treasured money so much that it

had never occurred to me to buy a gift when it wasn't someone's birthday. However, I was determined to bring kindness to my class. In the convenience store, I did in fact use my money managing instincts to weigh the costs of each snack selection, but arrived in class with my classmates' favourite candies. The priceless looks of joy on their faces showed me the answer to creating a kinder society: promoting kindness ourselves. That day, I saw many people using the snacks as a discussion topic while opening up to someone they usually ignored. It gave me happiness which motivates me to continue performing acts of kindness, not only towards my class, but to my family, friends, and even strangers!

Although using kindness to create a safer class environment seems like a small action, the positive effect it has on myself and those around me continues to grow. I believe that 'kindness' means to provide others with unsolicited support, or simply, to care about others. I am currently a member of Key Club, a club at my school that promotes service and kindness, with the motto: Caring-Our Way of Life. Being a part of this club, along with performing acts of kindness, has helped me learn how important kindness is, which has enabled me to influence others to be kind. Eventually, when more and more people care less about themselves and more about others, the world will be safe for all.