

The Evolving Forms of Kindness

(Original)

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“I have no time” is what we often hear in today’s society. Kindness is no longer simply giving our time.

Time is kindness. It is easy to forget the privilege of having a clean roof over our heads when we are brought up in a developed society. Taking the time to offer our help – be it to clean someone’s house or help in food-preparation is a humbling experience as it reminds us of the fact that not everyone is as privileged as us. We then learn to be appreciative of what we have. Given that time is often something that the majority finds a lack of, people has started looking into other acts of kindness.

Money is kindness. Many non-profit organizations (NPO) are sustained by donations. With the advancement in technology, monetary donations have evolved with time. No longer are we simply emptying our pockets of loose change to volunteers who are walking around with a money collection tin; we can now donate online with a click of a button. With the prevalence of crowdfunding websites such as Giving. Asia, people can even shop around for a cause that appeals to them before making their donations.

Pay-it-forward is kindness. This is a term coined in recent times, especially for the food industry. Food chains, and even smaller-scale hawkers, are offering this scheme to allow customers to pay for additional meals while only consuming one meal themselves. While some hawkers do provide free meals out of goodwill to those in need, this is often not sustainable for their operations. With the pay-it-forward scheme, they can rely on customers who pre-paid for extra meals, allowing the hawkers to strike a balance between making profits and doing charity.

Attention is kindness. Contact time is still a valued form that has persevered over time. From special-needs children to old folks to prisoners, these are the vulnerable groups of people who tend to be overlooked in society. They often seek a sense of belonging even though they are often outcasted. Befriending sessions are a great way to engage them as we lend them a listening ear to provide support.

Empathizing is kindness. Hair for Hope is an annual event whereby people get shaved in public as a sign of their support. The beneficiaries of the shaving are the cancer victims who faced severe hair loss due to chemotherapy. For those who treat their hair as part of their personal image, it takes enormous courage for them to shave and is often viewed as an encouragement to the cancer victims. Walking in others' shoes is a simple act of kindness to give our support and encouragement to those who did not have a choice.

Speaking is kindness. Free speech has never gained more momentum than now. A simple tweet or mention is all it takes to lift people up. When a YouTuber was criticized for crying over a Star Wars trailer, his life was turned around as the Star Wars actor offered his encouragement, creating an outpour of support from the online community which eventually overwhelmed his critics. Words are like weapons, and we need to pick the right side to fight for.

Volunteerism is kindness. Some people shell out a substantial amount of cash to participate in volunteering efforts overseas. No longer are they looking at the regular tourist attractions as they shift their gaze to the hidden sight of the countries. This meets the needs of those who want time away from work, and also spend some time doing good. Their efforts are often geared towards building facilities, such as housing or even schools for the less privileged communities in developing countries. Taking a vacation has been redefined.

Kindness no longer comes in a single form. In the current society, kindness takes on many forms, and there is bound to be a form that works for you.