

## **My Values: Instructions to a Sustainable Life**

(Original)

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When I was a child, my grandfather asked me a question: “What would you do if you see a bird’s nest?” My childish heart warmed to the question for I had had longed to pluck a nest so I can keep the bird and her eggs, cage it, and boast about it around the neighborhood. A nest was a child’s hunting trophy after endless days of combing the woods. So I immediately answered: “I’ll watch over the nest at dusk to see if the bird is back and then I’ll trap it with my hands.” My grandfather, already a flickering candle, and had witnessed how others taper without ever realizing the darkness that surrounded them, frowned at my answer as if it was the cruelest thing he’d heard. He then proceeded to lecturing me about how I should be kind, nurturing, and compassionate to all creatures, to the planet in general. On that very moment, my life changed in one sitting. I was no longer the boy who pined for a bird’s nest. My grandfather taught me how to value and sustain life.

Now that I have become a grown man, my grandfather’s question is still very alive with me. It’s growing feathers and wings, flapping uncontrollably inside my chest. Whenever I am caught in the wrong place and at the wrong time, I would recall his question before making a decision: What would you do if you see a bird’s nest? I am ashamed of my answer back then but the values he taught me have been so enlightening and I am using it to make the planet a better Earth to live in; a livable society where every creature can thrive and live their lives to their purposes without being bothered.

I believe that simple acts of kindness are healing elements which can cure prejudice, racism, discrimination, and even prevent accidents. I still remember one night when I was driving home from the town. There was a young cyclist whose bicycle didn’t have lights. The road was very dangerous as he sped his bicycle under the inconsistent streetlights because vehicles might run over him. It was a just a grain of kindness but I slowed down, tailed him

on and illuminated his path with my headlights until he got home. There was also an incident where a stray cat was hit by stones and pursued by children. When the mischievous youngsters passed by, I happily gave them the direction of the unfortunate cat. When they went off, I took out the poor animal from my bag and carried it home. Helping others anonymously gives a different kind of glow. If only people value kindness and compassion, all good things ensue.

What Ukraine, Afghanistan, Syria, Pakistan and other belligerent nations need is a simple act of kindness. What the world's thinning rainforests need in order to be thick again is compassion. We humans are very much capable than being harsh creatures. Planet Earth can breathe again if we value life, if we put urgency on the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN. We are running out of time. If we don't act all life will perish and it is our own undoing. No one needs to be harsh to attain their desire. And not all desires should be born out of cruelty. We can always choose to be selfless and peaceful people. The citizens of the world should be kind and compassionate if we want to build a strong, interconnected world.

I am just an ordinary person writing to the world among other young people who are also writing for a better world. Hear us and value our values. We are not called together only to disperse. We are here to reunite a divided world. I hope that when you get caught in a bad situation, just remember what my grandfather told me about what to do with a nest. Surely, life would be sustained.