

Acting with conscious kindness

Even casual choices can have a profound impact.



I was already late when the shuttle bus stopped outside the airport and I realized that I had forgotten to lock my car. There were valuable items in the car that I did not want to risk losing, but I couldn't make the trip back to the parking facility without missing my flight. The dilemma left me stressed and frustrated.

"Is there anything I can do to help?" the bus driver named Ezekiel asked, sensing my distress.

When I explained the situation, he smiled and promised to lock the car, writing down the space number where I had left it. He refused my offer to pay him, saying, "I'm happy to do it." I rushed into the airport filled with relief and gratitude at this unexpected act of kindness from a stranger.

On one level, this could simply be a story of good customer service. But for me, it illustrates one of the great lessons in the business of life: the power of kindness.

There were many other passengers on the bus that morning anxious to be shuttled to other airlines. He could have simply hurried on, and yet Ezekiel chose to stop and offer kindness to a troubled stranger. It was a choice that had a profound impact.

A short time later, I was at the security checkpoint behind a woman traveling with two small children. The line was stopped as she struggled to carry one child and herd another through the process of removing shoes and belts.

"Oh, great. This is all we need," said a man behind me in an angry voice.

And then I saw the look on the woman's face, a look similar to the one Ezekiel must have seen on mine earlier that morning.

"Is there anything I can do to help?" I asked, handing her two of the plastic trays used for personal items.

"Would you?" she said, giving me a diaper bag and her purse. "I'm happy to do it," I said, as she filled the trays with toys, shoes and her toddler's pink backpack.

I placed her purse and diaper bag on the conveyer belt. As she guided the chil-

dren through the metal detector, she glanced back at me with a smile of gratitude on her face. It gave me a feeling of real joy.

Sometimes in the business of life, we can be so focused on ourselves that we think our needs are the only ones that matter. We become angry and impatient at anyone, or anything, that hinders us. When the car in front of us drives too slowly or we have to wait for a cashier to check the price of an item, we respond in ways that later make us feel regretful or ashamed.

But we always have a choice.

Sometime soon, if not today, you will be under stress at work. And when it happens, you can choose to be angry and more demanding of the people around you, or you can remember that they are under similar stress and you can offer to help them.

When frustration begins to spill over into your relationships with your family or friends, you can choose to lash out, saying things that you will later regret, or you can stop to remember that these are the people you care most about and you can choose to treat them with patience and love.

These are the choices that ultimately define who you are. And in your final moments of life, these are the choices you will wish you had made. Why not make them now?

Remember also that each choice to show kindness to another person ripples outward from that person to another and another, beyond your imagination.

"Excuse me, sir. I believe you dropped this," I heard a woman's voice call out after a man rolling his bag toward the check-in counter — the same woman I had helped earlier.

She handed him a small plastic card that I could see was his driver's license.

"Thank you so much," he said, realizing the enormous difficulty he would have faced attempting to travel without it.

"I'm happy to do it," was all I heard her say.

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