

The Small Acts Workbook

Celebrating the Power of Simple Kindness

In a world obsessed with fame and all things that make headlines and draw the attention of the masses, we often overlook the small things we can do every day that can make a difference. Offering a listening ear, lending a helping hand, even sharing a smile— all such things have the potential to give another person hope when they need it; all such things can change a life.

About this Workbook

(Or Why Bother Writing It Down?)

There's an often-referenced story of a Harvard study on the power of written goals. When I looked it up, I found that Harvard may not have conducted this study; some say Yale did.

Meanwhile, in 2007, Dr. Gail Matthews of Dominican University, published the results of a study she conducted that shows that "Those who wrote their goals accomplished significantly more than those who did not write their goals." (Dr. Gail Matthews, 2007) Many successful business leaders and other high achievers would concur with these findings, based on their own experience.

Within this workbook, you can write your goals.

I propose we move beyond the "someday maybe" thinking we can all indulge in; let's get clear on the significant good things we wish to accomplish, write these things as goals, and take action to make them reality in the world.

Open Your Mind and Begin

Like *The Greater Purpose Workbook*, this is a workbook of compassionate thinking. Imagining. Brainstorming. Envisioning. And ultimately, committing to action. Some of the exercises may feel redundant, but they are designed to open your mind and keep your thoughts flowing out on paper. Think and write freely!

We can all do more. We can all do better. Let's begin.

“Every (person) must decide if (they) will walk in the light of creative altruism.”

-Martin Luther King

MLK talks about every person. Yes, every one of us must decide.

Maybe also think of it this way: every one of us gets to decide.

Making such a choice is a beautiful thing, after all. And I love that MLK calls it “creative altruism.” Emphasis on creative.

Brainstorm below about different things you can do to help one other person, or a few people, or many. Be creative. Free your mind.

And remember: one act of kindness can change a life. And one changed life? That can change the world.

"No act of kindness, however small, is ever wasted."

-Aesop

Think of a time when a little thing made your day. Now think of those who are struggling in life, in ways that perhaps you are not. There is always someone with bigger problems than our own, after all. And even when we ourselves struggle, we are uplifted, too, when we help those around us in whatever way we can.

Brainstorm about small things that can lift others up. If anything seems "too trivial," remind yourself of those moments in your life when something small changed your perspective, gave you a bit of hope when you needed it, etc. Everyone needs to be lifted up at times, and one small act of kindness might be much more significant to someone than you could ever imagine.

List below small acts of kindness you can perform in your everyday life:

“What oxygen is to the lungs, such is hope to the meaning of life.”

-Emil Bruner

This quote is worth pondering deeply. Think of someone losing hope. Really pause and imagine it. Imagine the feeling. The fear, even panic. The deep sadness. The emptiness. The sense of being completely alone, faced with problems that feel impossible to solve. It could be anyone— a single parent struggling to make rent. A young person being bullied at school. A middle-aged person who lost their job. Someone whose business did not survive the pandemic and who has lost all they built, their confidence, and their sense of purpose. An elderly person who feels weak and tired but needs to bag groceries to make ends meet. A disabled veteran who sacrificed for others but who now lives on the street. Someone who is deeply lonely. Someone who feels invisible, insignificant. Your neighbor who lost a loved one. It could be anyone.

One small act of kindness could give them just enough hope to get through one more day. Or enough hope to gain a new, positive perspective, or restore their faith in humanity.

Simple words of encouragement. A caring phone call to check in. A smile. A hug. A handwritten note. A thank you. An “atta boy.” One kind word. A simple question from the heart: “How can I help?”

For someone losing hope, even a small gesture showing you care could be the oxygen they need to keep going. With such a gesture, you could literally change or save a life.

Being kind can change a life. Being kind can save a life.

Think of more opportunities you can seek to be kind to others, to give them hope. Write here:

“What oxygen is to the lungs, such is hope to the meaning of life.”

-Emil Bruner

“If I Can Stop One Heart from Breaking”

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**If I can stop one heart from breaking,
I shall not live in vain;
If I can ease one life the aching,
Or cool one pain,
Or help one fainting robin
Unto his nest again,
I shall not live in vain.**

”

-Emily Dickinson