

Volume 9, Issue 3

MOTIVATED

THE MAGAZINE THAT MOVES YOU!

SHINE YOUR LIGHT!

THE POWER OF A SMILE

Parenting from the Heart

Teaching kids to help others



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Motivated Vol 9, Issue 3
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“The Man Who Planted Trees,” by Jean Giono, is the allegorical tale of Elzéard Bouffier, a humble shepherd who single-handedly transformed a barren region of southern France by planting nuts as he watched his sheep graze on a different hillside each day.

In the story, that one shepherd's decades of work resulted in the entire area being reforested, which brought back the wildlife, retained the springs, and improved the soil for farming. Eventually, more people moved to the once nearly deserted region, and it became alive and prosperous.

The story tells us that Elzéard embarked on his mission after his only son and wife passed away. Many people would have retreated into their sorrow, or simply brushed off the idea as crazy, impossible, or not their responsibility. But he put his inspired idea into action, and slowly but surely changed his part of the world.

He had a clear goal and a simple plan. He probably didn't set out to change his world on such a grand scale, but good things have a way of growing when we rise to the challenge. Problematic circumstances didn't hinder his work, nor did other seemingly unsurmountable difficulties and setbacks. When he realized his sheep were nibbling on the saplings, he switched to beekeeping. When the 10,000 maples he'd planted died one year, he switched to beeches the following year, with more success.

Great things are often the result of patient plodding. His task wasn't especially difficult, but he stuck with it day after day for decades, doing what he could, and trusting God to do the rest.

What seemingly crazy impossible idea do you have? With God's help, it may not be as crazy or impossible as you think. Go ahead. Change your life. Change your world.

Christina Lane
For *Motivated*



Shine Your Light!

By Anna Perlini

I first met Marina almost 20 years ago at a workshop organized by a Japanese NGO for Bosnian refugee women. She was warm and friendly and was definitely adding her own very original artist's touch to the event, even though she was just helping these women make some simple greeting cards. A few years later, she accompanied two busloads of the same refugee women to Italy as part of an exchange program. That's when I got to know her humorous side! She was always livening up the atmosphere with jokes, songs, and her full contagious laugh.

Then I heard she was having some marriage problems, and as her life entered a tumultuous stage, she started visiting more often for comfort and encouragement. Tears would often stream down her face and her once-sunny personality gave way to gloom and despair. On top of this, she began a battle with breast cancer.

We eventually noticed that she would disappear each year for a while around Carnival (a momentous event in our town). Once, my husband met her at a parade, dressed as a clown and with a big smile on her face. The next time she

visited, he told her, "Wait a minute. You were a great clown, and not only were you making others happy, but you were the happiest I've seen you in a while! You have a gift! Why not come with us to do clown therapy? I guarantee this will change your life!"

She accepted the challenge and her life did radically change! She started participating in our clown therapy events and training young volunteers; and she began her own events business for birthdays and other parties. She's appeared on local TV, and reporters wrote about her in newspapers. People everywhere in town know and love her.

Sometimes she gets sick, or even just tired, and understandably so, but never for long. In her own words, "Just a few days at home are enough for me to start getting sad and introverted. I need to put on my clown costume, get out of the house, get that sunshine out, and go and make someone happy. That's the best cure for my own problems." ■

The role of a clown and a physician are the same: it's to elevate the possible and to relieve suffering.

—Patch Adams (b. 1945)

4 Totally Realistic Ways to Make a Difference in the World



By Leigh Newman, adapted

Want to make a difference but don't know where or how to start? Consider these unexpected but realistic ways... from a man who's spent his life giving back.

Moved by the poverty he'd seen on his travels, Jim Ziolkowski gave up a lucrative career in finance to start buildOn—a nonprofit that runs after-school programs in disadvantaged areas of the U.S., and builds free schools for children around the globe. His new memoir, *Walk in Their Shoes: Can One Person Change*

the World? details his experiences in the South Bronx, Mali, Haiti, Nepal, and Detroit, as well as chronicles the lives of the kids and adults he met along the way. Here he explains how each of us can pitch in in large, measurable ways—without quitting our jobs, giving up everything we own, or moving across the ocean:

1. Start With Your Own Family

So many of us think that we have to go out into the world to serve, but as we search for that nearby soup kitchen or nursing home, we forget how many

isolated, needy members of society exist in our immediate circle. Is there a nephew in your life without anyone to take him to (or pay for) his school? Is there an elderly aunt whose car needs an oil change? Compassion, says Ziolkowski, isn't just for strangers.

2. Rethink Your Birthday

We all want to volunteer regularly, but when our calendars start exploding with to-dos, we often forget to schedule the hours—or can't even find them. Instead, consider celebrating your birthday with eight hours of service. It's easy to remember; whether you like it or not, that particular day happens without fail.

The idea, Ziolkowski credits to Rayia Gaddy, a teenager in his Detroit after-school program. Three weeks before her 15th birthday, Gaddy's big brother Vandel was killed; she was devastated. "She couldn't talk to people," he says, "she couldn't come out of her room." When her birthday arrived, she knew she didn't want to throw a party. Instead, she headed to a homeless shelter and spent the day serving meals and playing board games, an eight-hour stretch that inspired her to become a permanent helper at the facility. How many of us moan and groan about our own birthdays? What if, instead, it was the day that most inspired you? In Gaddy's case, that one "celebration" prompted her to complete 700 hours of life-changing work ... while she was still in high school.

3. Be You. Even the Not-So-Chipper You.

Nobody really brings this up, says Ziolkowski, but we sometimes feel as if we have to act differently when

we're helping people—pulled together, positive, and cheerful at every moment. But take the case of Gaddy. During her first day at the homeless' center, she tried to smile, to fake her way through it, until several of the men asked her what was the matter. "They had been through trauma themselves," Ziolkowski says, "and they could sense that something was wrong." When she told the truth about why she had come, she and the men formed a connection, which helped her as much as them. That's the secret of service, says Ziolkowski, it's about both people receiving.

4. Start a Chain Reaction

Feeding and providing shelter for children is crucial, but so is teaching kids—not just to fish or to farm or to read—but to help others. This is especially true with underprivileged children, says Ziolkowski. By donating their time and efforts, they realize that even if they don't have an Xbox or a car, or in some cases, a house, they can contribute something, be it time or kindness or experience. This is why the participants in Ziolkowski's Detroit-area after-school programs are sent to Africa to build schools. If you teach a child to serve, he says, "There's a chain reaction." Gaddy, for example, after volunteering at her local homeless' shelter, traveled with buildOn to Nicaragua to build schools in developing villages; now she runs her own volunteer programs at college. "All told," says Ziolkowski, "the people she's influenced are in the thousands." ■

For more information, visit
<https://www.buildon.org/>



WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?

By Iris Richard, adapted

I was reading a well-illustrated cartoon story about taking the time to help our neighbors in need to a group of eight- to nine-year-old school children. It gave some vivid examples, including someone being hurt and robbed, and in the conclusion encouraged the children to be like the people in the story who had mercy and reached out to those who were in trouble.

One boy with a head full of red hair

and a freckled face asked, “How do I find a neighbor that needs my help?”

This question got me thinking! True, it isn’t every day that we come across a hurt person on the street, if ever, or witness someone being robbed or mistreated, and my physical neighbor rarely needs something from me that I know of.

Exploring the thought further, I pictured one of my routine days, which went something like this:

Half an hour of early morning reflection, followed by some exercise and a quick breakfast. Getting out the door on time to beat the rush-hour traffic is often a scramble. Even if I'm on time for appointments, most everyone in our city isn't, often leaving me running late for my next appointment, which forces me to join the circle of latecomers. In turn it leaves me disgruntled, with little compassion to stop and place a coin in the hand of the bedraggled elderly beggar woman at the street corner, or the man in the wheelchair with stumps instead of legs sitting by the road with his hand outstretched.

I'd rushed by. Were those my neighbors?

I'd moved from one event to the next with little time to answer an SMS from a friend who needed a few minutes of my time. A listening ear might have meant the world to him. Was he my neighbor?

I'd glanced over an email from an old acquaintance who explained how his life had taken a downward turn and that he needed someone to talk to. This has to wait until later, I'd decided, as I turned to pressing business emails. Could he have been my neighbor?

When I'd reached my car in the parking lot later that day, the man parked next to me was frantically turning over his engine, trying to get his car started, but to no avail. It seemed he was in need of a jumper cable. Yikes, that had to be coming from someone, but not me. My jumper cable was deeply buried in the trunk of my car, under some supplies which I needed to deliver on my way home. Surely he isn't my neighbor, I'd thought as I jumped behind the wheel

with a sorry look. In any case, I was on my way to a client and was running late.

After reflecting on this day, I realized that each day brings along a neighbor or two, and how easy it is to brush them aside and go on with "important" business. I also contemplated the many times I had benefited from a friendly person who'd decided that I was a neighbor and reached out with a helping hand when I was in a tight spot. So I decided to pay more attention to the little deeds of kindness and the small niceties I could extend to the neighbors who might come along the path of my busy days.

The very next day, I was tested on this decision when a friend called, asking if I could babysit her toddler for an hour while she went for a dental appointment. I'd planned to take that Saturday off, but remembering my resolution, I said yes, trusting that I could spare an hour and still have enough time left for relaxation afterward. I also dropped a note to my sad acquaintance, and pressed a coin into the hand of the old lady at the corner. Thankfully, nobody needed my jumper cable that day.

There were other neighbors throughout the coming weeks, and there will always be plenty more in the future. Even a smile can go a long way, as well as a helping hand lent, a coin spared, a bag carried, an encouraging SMS sent, a meal shared, a moment of undivided attention given, or that overdue phone call made.

It's surprising to see the countless little attitudes and deeds that can improve the world around us, if we pay attention and remember to ask ourselves, "Who is my neighbor?" ■

LIGHT UP YOUR CORNER

By Evelyn Sichrovsky, adapted

I stirred at the now-familiar sound of a baby crying plaintively. Behind the partitioning curtain, I could hear his mother's despondent, weary voice trying to soothe him. I was fifteen, and I was in the children's ward of the hospital after having undergone a tonsillectomy the day before. I pressed the ice pack more tightly to my throat and face while I watched this exhausted, careworn mother pacing the narrow aisle as she rocked her tiny, weeping son.

His pitiful cries were somewhat muffled by the bandage above his mouth. The day before, I had overheard his mother discussing with a nurse how her son had been born without an upper lip. At only four months old, this was already his third surgery.

My mind went back to visiting hours the evening before, when his father had come. I watched as he lovingly cradled his son and fed him by pouring a little milk into his mouth and then very gently shaking his head to help him swallow it. Without an upper lip, his son couldn't nurse or drink from a bottle like other babies.

I was brought back to the present as a nurse came in for her rounds. I reached for the fresh ice pack she offered and watched her bend over the baby to change his bandage. Later, as his cries

subsided and he drifted into a restless sleep, she turned to go. But then she paused. "It must be very difficult," she said softly, touching his mother's arm. "Oh yes," came the reply, in a voice full of pain. Looking away, her voice broke as she went on. "I often ask myself why ... why I brought him into the world like this!"

As the nurse's footsteps faded down the hall, the mother's words echoed in my ears. I wanted to encourage her. But what could I say? How could I say anything at all? My voice had been temporarily reduced to a raspy whisper, and speaking would be very painful.

Still unsure of what I would say and how I'd say it, I put down my ice pack and slipped out of bed. Soon we were talking. My voice was scratchy, my words were simple and a bit clumsy, and my face flushed with my usual shyness. But as we conversed, I realized with awe that God had used me to bring some light to a hurting heart.

Many years have passed, but I often think back on that experience. It's so easy to feel small, and to doubt that we can make a difference, but we are each set in a corner of this dark world to shine our unique light. Let's remember to light up our corner, whenever and however we can. ■

THE POWER OF A SMILE



By Curtis Peter van Gorder, adapted

Smiles are powerful. You've probably met a few gifted people, like I have, who radiate warmth and friendliness all the time. They smile so much that just being around them recharges your battery. Babies are experts in this as well. Without saying a word, they lighten your day with their smiles.

These days, many companies train their employees to smile at customers, even when they're talking to them on the phone. Of course, the professional smile can at times seem insincere. As a matter of fact, extensive research has been done on the nature of smiling to determine which smiles appear genuine. These findings are useful in selecting juries, or determining the honesty of someone that needs to be trusted.

That said, even though we know that these professional smiles are sometimes insincere, we still miss them when they're not there, as anyone knows who has felt the negative effects of a scowl from a grumbling cashier.

I recently read an article about a man named Hans Bergen who lived in a tiny town in the Netherlands, whose face was disfigured. He lived a lonely life, rejected socially by everyone in his community

and spurned by his own relatives.

Everyone he met seemed to ignore or mock him, except for one young girl named Anna Martin, who gave him a kind smile, the one and only time she met him. When this man died, he left a considerable amount of money to her in his will in appreciation for the kindness that she showed him. "She was the only one who smiled at me," he wrote.

A friend of mine experienced a similar story. Helga was volunteering in Thailand when she met an elderly farmer resting on the beach on his vacation. She gave him a friendly smile and struck up a conversation. Over the course of the next 20 years, they continued to write each other once a month or so, but they never met again. Then one day, Helga received a letter from this man's lawyer, saying that he had left her a large inheritance in gratitude for the kindness and concern that she'd shown him in her communication.

Never underestimate the value of a smile. It costs nothing, and we all have an infinite stock to give away. ■

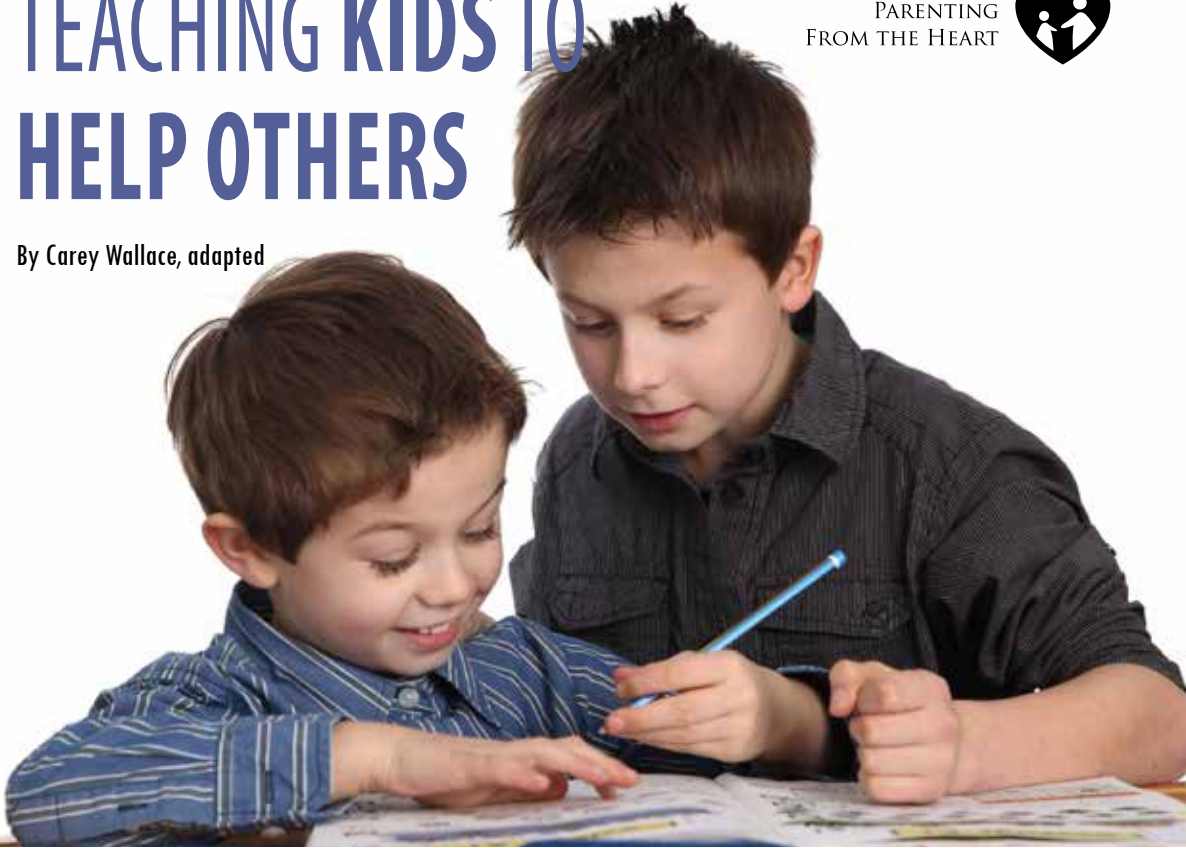
Every time you smile at someone, it is an action of love, a gift to that person, a beautiful thing. —Mother Teresa (1910-1997)

TEACHING KIDS TO HELP OTHERS

PARENTING
FROM THE HEART



By Carey Wallace, adapted



Nobody wants their kid to get mixed up with the wrong people. But even good kids face big challenges and tough choices in life. And often, the first people they turn to are other kids.

That means our kids may be weighed down by the situations their friends are in—and not sure how to help.

So how can parents start good conversations with kids about what do when they see their friends struggling?

Like most adults, says Michele Borba, an educational psychologist and author of *Unselfie: Why Empathetic Kids Succeed in an All about Me World*, most kids are likely to be bystanders rather than helpers when they see someone in trouble. And “the No. 1 reason is not because they don’t care, but because they don’t know

what to do,” says Borba. “We’ve focused so much on helping kids be good workers that we’re not helping them be good helpers.”

At the elementary age, Borba says, parents can help kids build empathy by changing the script. Instead of asking, “What did you do today?” Borba says, try asking “Who did you help?” Parents can also be on the lookout for moments when kids have tuned into someone in need, and encourage them to think about what they’re seeing, with questions like, “How would you feel if that were you? What do you think that you can do?”

Middle school kids are incredibly sensitive to the opinions of others, which is why bullying and peer pressure are so prevalent at this age, says Borba.

So a big concern for middle schoolers is how to stick up for a friend. In the moment, Borba says, kids don't always think quickly enough to intervene. But if parents hear about peer pressure or bullying, they can encourage kids to reach out to their friends, even after the fact, to let them know they're not alone. And encourage kids to help their friends reach out to a trusted authority. One question all parents should ask their kids at this age, according to Borba: "If there's a problem, who would you go to?"

By high school, the stakes can be high. "We've never seen such high rates of stress and teen suicide," Borba says. And according to her, "the best safety net is kids helping kids." But in order to help, kids need specific direction. Parents

should continue to make sure kids know how to connect with caring counselors and resources in the community, and be willing to talk through the situations of individual friends as they come up. Borba suggests setting up a distress code, known only to kids and parents, so that kids can reach out to parents for help even in the midst of a high-pressure social situation. Kids could text the code to their parents or say certain words over the phone, which would indicate parents should drop everything and come and get them.

And, she says, parents should keep an eye out for the ways that caring for their friends affects kids—asking kids how they feel, and how they're doing, as they walk through tough seasons with their friends. ■

MAKE SOMEONE'S DAY

Anonymous

Have you ever had a bad day just because you crossed paths with someone who was in a foul mood? Maybe it was someone on the bus or another customer in a store—someone who you normally wouldn't have even noticed—but that one grumpy or inconsiderate person cast a cloud on your whole day.

On the other hand, have you ever had a day that went great and realized later that it all started when you met someone who was especially nice to you? Maybe it was the way she smiled at you, or the way he picked up and handed you something you had dropped, or held a door open for

you—only a little gesture, but one that had a positive impact on your day.

Everyone has influence. Moment by moment your attitude and level of happiness are reflected in the little things you say and do, and those are bound to affect others. What kind of impact do you usually have?

Think of the things people have done that made your day, and make a point of doing similar kind things for others. Not only will you brighten someone else's day, but you will also find that you are happier, and see life more positively. ■

Be a *light*

NOTABLE
QUOTES



We are told to let our light shine, and if it does, we won't need to tell anybody it does. Lighthouses don't fire cannons to call attention to their shining—they just shine.—**Dwight L. Moody**

Shine your light and make a positive impact on the world; there is nothing so honorable as helping improve the lives of others.—**Roy T. Bennett**

A smile is the light in the window of your face that tells people you're at home.—**Author Unknown**

People are like stained-glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in, their true beauty is revealed only if there is a light from within.—**Elisabeth Kubler-Ross**

We cannot hold a torch to light another's path without brightening our own.

—**Ben Sweetland**

Light gives of itself freely, filling all available space. It does not seek anything in return; it asks not whether you are friend or foe. It gives of itself and is not thereby diminished.—**Michael Strassfeld**

Wherever you go, no matter what the weather, always bring your own sunshine.—**Anthony J. D'Angelo**

Dare to reach out your hand into the darkness, to pull another hand into the light.—**Norman B. Rice**

