

## Comedy, Camaraderie, and Terminology: How Connection Changes Lives

Kindness. Etymologically, the word has its roots in the Old English term *kyndness*—meaning *nation*, or *produce; an increase*. Similarly along this vein, the word kindness can be traced to the Middle English *kindenes* or Proto-Germanic *kunjam*, respectively meaning *courtesy* or *natural, native, family*. Interestingly enough, the etymological roots of peace move along similar veins of meaning, with a variety of old language forms like Anglo-French and Latin denoting peace's early forms as “[*the*] *internal peace of a nation*”, “*friendly relations between people*”, “*to covenant or agree*”, and more.

Today, kindness, as well as peace, mean many things: connection amongst family, the growth of friendship, and the formation of groups bound together not just by blood but by mutual allegiances or agreements. This aptly shows that despite how long the world has turned, despite how much its history and landscape evolves and even despite the fact that current Earth would be incomprehensible to a 5th-century archaic Anglo-Saxon or Germanic Lombard, the principle tenets of kindness have still managed to stay roughly the same as before—ones that push for peace.

For one, kindness acts as the facilitator for people to link on the basis of cooperation and connection—forming tight-knit family or friends that support each other in times of crisis, inclusive and friendly social media communities that empower one to speak out, and conversations where people can open their minds and receive things that they may have not been able to understand before with acceptance and grace.

To emphasize this point, one can look at the concept of comedy. How did comedy, the genre once regarded as cheap and overly-dramatic, rise to become the subject of Netflix shows, brand deals, massive stadiums, and stand-up stardom? The best comedy connects with and prioritizes its audience. Imagine a comedian on stage, making quippy jokes, clever wordplay, and a humorous jab or two, overall utilizing crowdplay in order to make their watchers roar with laughter—a group of people that ordinarily may never have even spoken to this one jokester winding up departing with grins on their faces and lightness in their hearts. Comedy, pushed to its limits, can touch on stereotypes and societal pressures, poking fun at preconceived notions and through this fostering openness, critical thinking, empathy and more. It—by highlighting absurdities through humor—extends a metaphorical hand to the listener, inviting them in to have fun and connect with others.

The world's past has been defined starkly by separation and stereotypes, but courtesy and kindness between different groups of people have allowed many to see through the smoke and mirrors of labels founded on misaligned negativity to the humanity underneath. Through the

power of goodwill and tolerance that kindness promotes, incredible bonds are forged that can enhance many people's qualities of life as well as society's overall harmony.

Humor isn't the only thing able to make an impact—or at least, not humor alone. It's the person that makes the impact, and oftentimes those people are inspired by others who were inspired by others who were inspired by others, facilitating a human chain of compassion and care. Many people speak fondly of their mentors—teachers, parents, siblings, and even fellow peers—who took them under their wing and shaped their futures for the better, or of little gestures left by others that have pulled them back from their breaking point. In fact, one of my favorite memories made this past year relates to this.

When I was an elementary school kid, I never really enjoyed music that much. Being one of the many people who grew up learning and practicing piano as a solo instrument, the connection that people always said music could give wasn't ever able to reach me from my lonely living room at home. This changed when I picked up an oboe and was thrust into the world of group music. A moment that particularly stood out to me was when I joined an youth orchestra and walked, alone, into my first rehearsal with the group. It wasn't my first time in an orchestra—I've been in school bands and a few ensembles—but taking my seat in the massive hall, seeing the other students mingle and talk excitedly, and quietly setting up in the front while trying not to seem out of place was terrifying.

I saw a flicker of movement from the back row. As the rehearsal continued and we slogged through sight-reading and tuning chords, I could feel eyes burning into the back of my hair—several times, the turn of a girl's head in my peripherals.

Honestly, I thought she was—kind of creepy.

When break began and the chatting started anew, I pulled out my phone and prepared to complain to my school friends about not knowing anyone in the group. In the background, I saw the girl put down her clarinet, detach from her seat behind me, and begin weaving her way through the hall, dodging kids and chairs and stray instrument parts—stopping with a *tap* on my music stand. I smiled up at her, wholly ready to flee the scene. Perhaps recognizing my nervousness, she sat down and introduced herself, saying that she recognized me from a competitive group we both got into early last year.

I didn't know it then, but she became one of my good friends in the orchestra, and one of the reasons as to how every Thursday—rehearsal time—became a highlight of the school year.

Though that event wasn't colossal or vastly world-changing in its importance, it helped me cement how simple acts of kindness—whether it be holding a thoughtful conversation with

someone, providing help and comfort in stressful situations, or even just saying hello to someone to make a friend—can impact others.

After around a third of the year into my arrival in the orchestra, another woodwind player transferred in, a bassoonist—exactly like me from before, quiet and glued to their phone. I came up to them when we were free from practice, tapped their stand to get their attention, and passed them an image—a vaguely marsupial-like decorated cake made in one of my school clubs that was meant to be a reindeer. I asked her what she thought the cake was.

As of today—3 counts for kangaroo, 2 counts for reindeer, 2 counts for bear/mouse and 1 count of “...what?”.

I consider that photo one of my most successful icebreakers.

Every single kind action piles up and inspires others to perform similar efforts of friendship, facilitating a peaceful and cooperative society. You don't need a background in music or a poorly-made Rudolph to bring happiness to someone, as kindness can come in many different forms—and even the smallest act can change a person's life.

Just like how language acts as the foundation for communication, kindness acts as the foundation for establishing peace within society. We must bridge the gap between people and bring them together under ideas of inclusivity and connection in order to dispel notions of bigotry and conflict. Through simple acts of amiability and decency, humanity can nurture greater peace and coordination within itself that can give rise to a better and more tolerant world.