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Expressing Our Kind Hearts

By **Regina V. Cates**

Expressing Our Kind Hearts

American cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead said, *“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”* You and I are the thoughtful and committed citizens who can change the world.

I appreciate your willingness to be part of my Kind Hearts community. Let’s do our best, each day, to be inspired and to inspire others to live a better, happier life by being: Kind, Informed, Neighborly, Devoted, Honest, Empathetic, Authentic, Responsible, Trustworthy, and Strong. In the following page we will explore the meaning of each quality.

KIND – Means you and I treat all people and animals as we want to be treated, with gentleness and respect. We live the Golden Rule. For example:

One day I found a dog wandering alone in my neighborhood. When I called the number on her tag, I got an answering machine. After I left a message with my contact information, I took the dog to my home.


Soon the phone rang, and an excited young man said he was on his way over. The dog and I went outside to wait. As the young man approached, the dog began to wiggle and bark. After clipping the leash to her collar, the young man turned to me with tears in his eyes.

“Thank you so much for finding Honey. I’m visiting my parents and the gardeners left the gate open. I didn’t even realize she was gone,” he said, as he reached out to hug me tight.

“You are welcome,” I replied.

It was the best feeling, being in the right place at the right time to help reunite a pet with the person who loved her. Being kind often creates a happy ending for someone else.

Let’s Be Kind.

 Put money in an almost expired parking meter. Pay for the order of the person behind us in line at the drive-through. Help reunite a lost pet with its owner.

-  Reach out to people who are lonely and feel unseen, unheard, unloved. Let people know they are cared for.
-  Pick up trash in our neighborhoods, parks, and public spaces. We can take the lead and do what needs to be done to help keep our world clean.
-  Write a thank-you note when we receive a gift. Acknowledge a kind deed with a kind deed.
-  Give to give, without expectation of reward. Giving with conditions is not truly giving, as our ego wants something in return. Giving without attachment is loving unconditionally.
-  Remember, the homeless people we encounter are men and women just like us. Treat all people with the respect and kindness with which we want to be treated.
-  If we like to bake, we can make something special for a homeless shelter in our community.
-  Respect the beliefs of others. No religion has a corner on God. Those who live the Golden Rule love and honor God regardless of their religion or lack thereof.
-  Teach children that being gentle with themselves, other people, and all living things is one of the strongest things they can do.
-  Grocery shop for an elderly or disabled neighbor. If they have a dog, offer to take it on walks.
-  If we play an instrument, visit a congregate living facility. Spend an hour or so playing for the residents and staff. Imagine what joy we will bring. And it will help us stay in practice.
-  Teach someone to read. Imagine the vast possibilities we will help open for them.

Regardless what form they take, acts of kindness provide us deep contentment. Knowing we have helped brighten someone’s day makes our heart feel full long after the event itself has passed.

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INFORMED - Is when you and I seek to understand the facts of a situation. Facts are based on evidence, not emotion or opinion.

One of my first jobs after college was as director of classified advertising for the *Columbia Missourian* newspaper. Part of my responsibility was to supervise journalism students who were enrolled in the University of Missouri School of Journalism. Upon graduation, some of these young people wanted to pursue careers as investigative journalists. They chose reporting because they wanted to make the world a better place by helping to expose corruption, greed, dishonesty, and phony news, and to report on matters of interest and safety to the public. In order to be well-rounded, they were required to work in different divisions of the newspaper, including advertising.

It was through the experience of working with journalism professionals and students that I came to admire the depth of integrity and honor of principled career investigative journalists. These people were not tabloid ambulance chasers. They were not purveyors of fake news, conspiracy theories, or half-truths. They did not spread gossip or vilify people. They did not intentionally mislead people because of some political or personal agenda. They dug deep to uncover tangible facts, to cite multiple sources, to ensure what they reported was true and verifiable.

It is because of women and men of honesty who are seasoned, fact-finding reporters, that you and I have access to the truth. Each day countless people of honor work hard to ensure truth speaks to power. To get the facts straight, we have an obligation to be informed about matters that concern all of us.

Let's Be Informed.

- ♥ Remember opinion is not fact! Opinion is:
(1) a belief or judgment that rests on grounds insufficient to produce complete certainty, and (2) a personal view, attitude, or appraisal. Seek fact.
- ♥ Being informed to facts requires us to turn off biased and opinion-driven commentary and refuse to listen to conspiracy theories or political attack ads that defame people.

- ♥ When talking about politics and religion, we are respectful, informed, and honest.
- ♥ We get informed about the history of slavery and the unequal treatment of people of color and women in many aspects of society.
- ♥ Refuse to follow those on social media who use it as a platform to denigrate other people or to spread fear, lies, hatred, and disinformation.
- ♥ Be aware that hateful, slanderous, divisive speech is not free speech. Words have power because words create real outcomes.
- ♥ Educate ourselves about governmental legislation that may not impact us personally but is detrimental to the rights of other people.
- ♥ Make thoughtful and informed decisions about whom to support for positions of authority. Ensure their behavior consistently aligns with the core values of honorable integrity:



- ♥ Refuse to be influenced by people who mistreat and judge other people, including those who do so in the name of God.
- ♥ Be informed when voting in every election, whether national, state, or local. VOTE up and down the ballot for every position.

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- ♥ Embrace new scientific and intellectual developments.
- ♥ Appreciate that education is lifelong and everything is designed to change and progress—the seasons, our planet, nature; scientific, technological, and cosmological discoveries; you and I.
- ♥ Confront the judgmental and limiting dogma we are exposed to in our religious experience that makes no sense to our heart, our soul.
- ♥ Carefully choose what we allow into our mind and heart. Stay aware of music and lyrics, news and television programs, and the movies we watch. The more positive we allow in, the more positive we express.

In order to make the best decisions we need to be knowledgeable by being informed to the facts.

NEIGHBORLY - Means we agree to maintain friendly and polite relations with the people in our neighborhood. We work to stay on good terms with them.

When I was a little girl, a group of people in my neighborhood always greeted new folks who moved in. I remember going with my mom and some of the other adults to deliver a freshly baked cake or cookies to the new families. The adults would talk about schools, churches, local stores, and other things. If they had kids, I would play with them. After that initial meeting, the new folks always waved and said hello. It felt good to know our neighbors.

As I moved away into my own series of apartments and homes, I always made it a point to get to know my neighbors. We are a human family, much more alike than different. The vast majority of us want the same things, like peace, happiness, and connectedness. So romance your soul by getting to know your neighbors, because our neighborhoods create our cities. Our cities create our states. Our states create our nation. Friendliness, helpfulness, and cooperation really do start at home, where we set an example of what actions good neighbors and positive community members take.

Let's Be Neighborly.

- ♥ Get to know our neighbors and people at the places where we do business. People who look out for each other are people who respect and care for one another.
- ♥ Teach ourselves to stop and count to ten when we encounter a stressful situation with a neighbor. You and I cannot think clearly when we're stressed or angry. It's been proven by science. So slow down, be patient, and stay calm.
- ♥ Smile. A smile helps other people feel good and lets them know they are seen. Smiling makes us feel great, too, because we are giving a bit of our heart to someone.
- ♥ Donate our skills to a nonprofit organization in our city. There are countless social service organizations that can use help from professionals who have invaluable expertise to offer.
- ♥ Help build a home for others. Habitat for Humanity and other home building organizations are always looking for people who want to help put a roof over someone's head. And we'll get a bit of physical exercise at the same time.
- ♥ When we see a problem, like a health hazard or unnecessary waste of resources in our community, tell someone who is in the position of power to do something. Write or call the appropriate city official. Our public servants cannot be in all places to see all problems. We can help them by letting them know.
- ♥ Investigate the possibility of starting a community garden. It's a wonderful way to bring people together and to encourage healthy eating in our neighborhood. A little patch of green space is not only good for the environment, it also is good for our heart.
- ♥ Volunteer at our local school to mentor a student in our field of expertise. Or be a tutor for a subject at which we excel, like math or computers, reading, or science. Children are the future of this world and investing in them is one of the best ways to make our world a better place.

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- ♥ Protect and respect the natural world and all animals. We are connected to all that is alive.
- ♥ Think about what we eat and be aware of where our food comes from. Purchase products that come from companies or restaurants that adhere to humane treatment of animals. God made all life and to treat all life respectfully is one way to honor God. Let's care about what we eat and the people involved in getting it to our local market.
- ♥ Think about the toxicity of the fertilizers and insecticides we put on our lawn or of the chemicals we put down the drain or on our head to dye our hair. Try plant-based hair dyes and environmentally friendly fertilizers and household cleaners.

Good people are everywhere! You and I are part of a worldwide collection of human beings who are more similar than different. We are a human family, interconnected, and dependent upon one another as good neighbors and stewards of our planet.

DEVOTED - Means we are committed to our families and friends. Also we are faithful to ourselves and our integrity.

My most beloved friend, Byll, is over six feet tall. His petite wife stands almost five feet. Those of us who know him are never surprised when he shows up for a visit wearing a kilt. He has been known to shave his legs for a bike race. Sometimes he adds black nail polish to complete an outfit.

He is super smart. When he was a senior in high school, Harvard University wanted him. Instead, he chose to pursue his Bachelor's and Master of Fine Arts degrees at a Southern college. Long after graduation, he is continuously learning, devouring books, journals, and periodicals on various subjects.

My friend is not a fan of opinion. He is careful to weigh subject matter with great attention to detail. He seeks tangible evidence to support his views on politics and social justice. He examines the world with an open mind and open heart. He ponders matters so deeply, he could have been Rodin's model for "The Thinker." And when disagreements arise, he remains even-tempered, respectful, and kind.

He is patient, which is an important merit to have in our relationship, since he is an atheist. He does not believe in God. I do believe in a benevolent, creative energy I call God. So there is an immense difference between us, one that could have ended our friendship before it began.

We may have different beliefs about God, but my friend Byll respects me, regardless of how we differ. I respect him too. In fact, our discussions about God challenged me to question why I do believe in God and what I believe God is. Without being urged to examine the rote and often confusing answers programmed into me by my religious upbringing, I would not have come to know God as I do. My atheist friend's calm and peaceful conviction about what is true for him helped me grow the authenticity I have. We're different but completely devoted to one another.

Let's Be Devoted.

- ♥ Stay faithful to all of our relationships.
- ♥ Support the individuality of our family members, friends, and other people.
- ♥ Refuse to get pulled into an argument while we are, or someone else is, upset.
- ♥ Help other people without expecting anything in return.
- ♥ Remain committed to our integrity and being a person of honorable character.
- ♥ Let's be devoted to our Kind Hearts goal.
- ♥ Consider the positive that is gained through differing with other people. Just because we disagree with someone does not make them wrong or us right. Often, truth is what we find when we stop to consider another point of view.
- ♥ Live our devotion to the god of our own belief without needing other people to believe as we do.
- ♥ Show dedication to our career by continuing to learn and grow in our chosen field.

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♥ Be dedicated to a cause by volunteering our time and skills to a not-for-profit social organization.

♥ Show devotion to our community by remaining informed about local, regional, and statewide policies that impact our city and neighborhood.

To romance our soul, we lead with our heart and remain devoted to our friends, family, and our integrity.

HONEST - Entails not lying or listening to lies, gossip, conspiracy theories, or disinformation. No matter how hard it is, we live the adage “honesty is always the best policy.”

I have been dishonest. More than once. I now know how important it is to be honest in order to create fulfilling relationships and a peaceful life. However, the only way I could learn the dangers of allowing ego to direct my behavior was by realizing that each time I lied, I was actually being a coward. I was not brave enough to remain aligned with my integrity and tell the truth regardless of the consequences. I excused lying as a good way to cover up something I did or I knew was wrong. Or I lied in a misguided attempt to make myself look more important than I was. Or so I would not have to be honest when someone asked my opinion about themselves.

I rationalized lying as harmless. No one would find out—right?

Yeah, right. The truth is, truth always comes out, eventually and assuredly, shining a bright spotlight on our character, or lack thereof.

No matter how hard it is to stay aligned with the integrity of soul and tell the truth, being honest with ourselves and other people is an act of personal power and self-respect. Sure, it can be quite challenging to always tell the truth. The temptation to avoid embarrassment or punishment, or to defend our fragile pride (ego), is often hard to resist, and rather than remain honorable, we lie. However, honesty is vital to establishing trust with other people and to being genuinely proud of ourselves.

Let's Be Honest.

- ♥ Truthfulness is the foundation of all successful relationships, including the one we have with ourselves. So be committed to telling the truth.
- ♥ Talk honestly about our feelings and experiences and express our needs, so we can create emotionally intimate relationships.
- ♥ Don't cheat on a test, job application, our resume, etc.
- ♥ Admit when we make a mistake.
- ♥ Be transparent by telling people the truth when they ask for our feedback.
- ♥ We don't envy or judge other people. Rather, we are happy for the welfare of others.
- ♥ Refuse to gossip—about ourselves, politicians, actors, anyone. You and I can go through life without participating in this destructive pastime.
- ♥ Do what we say we will do. We keep our promises.
- ♥ We don't exaggerate the facts.
- ♥ We do the right thing even when no one is looking.
- ♥ We teach our young girls and boys positive ways to identify their emotions and express their feelings.
- ♥ We encourage one another to feel what we feel.
- ♥ We nurture self-worth and respect in one another.
- ♥ We share life's highs and lows with people we trust to hold our heart safe.
- ♥ We allow ourselves to be seen by other people; our strengths and weaknesses.

Being honest means we remain truthful to ourselves, to other people, and we behave from our integrity.

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EMPATHETIC - Means we live with open hearts. We put ourselves in the position of other people to feel what they feel.

In the alcove of a storefront close to the corner of Fairfax Ave. and Wilshire Blvd. in Los Angeles, California, I sobbed in a homeless man's arms. I did not know the man. Most likely I will not see him again. But I will not forget the moment our hearts touched in the intimate dance of raw truth: He lives on the street, and I, in a warm apartment.

Our exchange began when I commented on his dog. He smiled very proudly and said, "Yeah, she's great. I've got her back and she's got mine."

As he spoke, he gently petted the dog. I reached into my wallet and took out all the money I had. Without counting or caring what he would do with it, I handed it to him.

He hesitantly took it. As our hands touched, my tears began. The man reached out, wrapped me in his arms and said, "It's okay. We're okay out here. Thank you for caring."

As I turned to leave, he said, "I love you."

I looked him in the eyes and said, "I love you too."

Until then I had never said "I love you" to a complete stranger, someone I had just met and with whom I had exchanged only a few brief moments of conversation. However, when I spontaneously responded to the man with "I love you," I meant it from the bottom of my heart and with every part of my being. There was no judgment. My soul was simply wide open, and the pure, honest emotion of having deep empathy for the man came pouring out.

Let's Be Empathetic.

- ♥ Have compassion for the suffering of others and the challenges they go through.
- ♥ Accept other people for who they are without judging them to be less than ourself.

- ♥ Give respect and earn respect.
- ♥ Share what we have with others.
- ♥ Condemn bullying and exclusive behavior as unacceptable.
- ♥ Interact with people using our heart, our emotional being.
- ♥ Listen to people to understand them. Not just hear them with our head. We work to comprehend emotionally what another person is communicating.
- ♥ We communicate with others clearly and cohesively. When our words, body and voice align, we communicate plainly, openly, patiently and honestly, so we can be trusted and respected.
- ♥ Support others as we want to be supported because we actually raise ourselves up by lifting one another up, NOT by tearing each other down.
- ♥ Display empathy by respecting the loving, peaceful, inclusive, and responsible religious beliefs of others.
- ♥ Treat everyone equally, no matter how rich or how poor.

AUTHENTIC - Is appreciating the fact everyone is unique, a one-of-a-kind original. So we stay true to ourself and respect other people's rights to be true to themselves.

The religion of my parents is Christian. As a child and young adult, I did not choose to adopt Christianity. I innocently became a victim of religious generational indoctrination, meaning I was told what to believe, as my parents were, and their parents before them. Also like my parents and theirs, I was intimidated into thinking if I challenged those beliefs I was going against God.

To create a life of authenticity, self-respect, and love, I had to confront what I was exposed to in my religious experience that made no sense to my heart, which is the soul I am. I had to ask hard

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questions and challenge judgmental beliefs and practices out of life-saving necessity, because as early as age five, I knew I was gay.

I cannot tell you how I knew so young. Yet it is not uncommon for some gay, bisexual, transgender people to know at such an early age. As you can imagine, being gay was a secret I kept as long as possible. I dared not tell anyone. I knew exactly what would happen. In church, and within my family and society, it was made clear how much my kind was despised and feared.

My parents, like others who are taught the Bible is the absolute and infallible word of God, were instructed to believe being gay is an intentional choice. Someone who is gay, they believe, deliberately chooses to sin against God. It is also believed we recruit people to our gay lifestyle: another untruth.

Early in life I found out, as many of us do, two places intended to provide an accepting, loving, and supportive haven—my Christian church in Texas and my home—actually did not. The adage *Love your neighbor as yourself* only seemed to apply if the neighbor, or child, met a list of specific criteria. I did not meet those conditions because I was not heterosexual.

I was emotionally devastated by the illogical and holier-than-thou reasoning of those who defended their condemnation of my sexual orientation, when Jesus himself did not say anything on the subject. The mixed messages I received, and the recurring question of why none of the adults in my life was confronting those contradictions, was crazy making. Warring against me and other people is not aligned with what Jesus taught. He would also not excuse my warring against people who judge me. As a result, I suffered under the heavy burden of resentment and confusion—a weight so massive it almost made me give up on life. But I did not give up.

Instead, I questioned my parents' motivation for taking the actions they did. I realized their desire to change me into what they, society, the Church, and Christianity considered normal was driven by fear. No matter how much my parents believed they were loving me, we do not love one another through insensitive fear. We can only love one

another with our sensitive heart; the soul we are, because each of us was made unique. To have a life of satisfaction and fulfillment, we must remain authentic to who we were born to be and also respect who other people were born to be.

Let's Be Authentic.

- ♥ Share our true self with others.
- ♥ Connect with people to understand their emotions, feelings, and experiences.
- ♥ Strive to grasp one another's perspective and engage in discussion about it.
- ♥ Be devoted to one another's individuality.
- ♥ Listen to others with a quiet mind. That means not finishing their sentences or interrupting or thinking of a response while they are speaking.
- ♥ Refuse to conform to what society dictates is success (wealth; power over people; social, religious, or political influence; physical beauty) to live aligned with being people of empathy and integrity.
- ♥ Champion equality so that all people can achieve the same results, regardless of the particular factors that condition each individual.
- ♥ Never give up our dreams. Those who are truly successful in life know there is no such thing as failure; there is always something positive to be gained from an experience.
- ♥ Focus on supporting ourselves as we want to be supported.
- ♥ Develop a process of continuous, honest self-reflection to determine if we are inclusive of others and behaving with love.
- ♥ Courageously separate ourselves from the people whose acts don't align with our integrity.

Being authentic with ourselves builds our confidence and feelings of self-worth. Being real in our relationships allows us to appreciate one another so we benefit from our differences.

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RESPONSIBLE - Is being accountable for our actions. We do not blame other people or circumstances for our behavior.

The most substantial shock I received in life was looking in the mirror and not recognizing the person looking back. Two back-to-back surgeries on my spine left me with permanent nerve damage, muscle atrophy, and a limp. It became easy to ignore the inner, aware voice that told me to keep exercising, eat right, and stretch. Instead, I ate without awareness, sat around feeling sorry for myself, and waited for a miracle.

I gained more than 50 pounds in what seemed like the blink of an eye, but it was actually not overnight. As I became emotionally detached from being responsible for my body, time got lost within my unconscious excuses.

I was fully caught up in the largest pity party I had ever hosted when something extraordinary happened. Originating from deep within my soul, the words *Do you enjoy feeling this way?* passed through my consciousness. "Of course not!" I screamed out loud to no one. My heart responded, *Who do you think is actually responsible for creating the joyful and fulfilling life you want?*

In the instant it took for "I am" to roll off my lips, the idea that someone outside me had the power to fix my life or heal the holes within my heart vanished. I became empowered by the truth. Creating the life I wanted was completely an inside job. If I am my own worst enemy, how can I be my own best friend? I was the only one capable of developing the self-love, intimacy, self-acceptance, peace, and joy for which I longed. I could no longer blame other people for my life. I realized my behavior is what creates my life. Which meant I had to assume complete responsibility for my attitudes, thoughts, words, and behavior.

Let's Be Responsible.

- ♥ Care about the impact of our actions, so we can create the most responsible (loving) outcome.
- ♥ Be devoted to continuous self-assessment to look at ourselves honestly with the goal of

improving behavior that is negative or hurtful to ourselves and other people.

- ♥ Apologize when we mess up. You and I are not meant to be perfect. But we can work to improve ourselves in order to create our best life.
- ♥ Accept that each of life's challenges holds the gift of making us smarter, kinder, and more flexible—when we choose to let them.
- ♥ Say no to feeling like a victim.
- ♥ Refuse to blame other people for our actions.
- ♥ Accept that we cannot control or change anyone but ourselves.
- ♥ Work to master a mind that has a mind of its own. Which means think about what we think to determine if our thoughts are logical, positive, kind, responsible, etc.
- ♥ Regardless how anyone else behaves, we accept it is our actions that create our life.
- ♥ Be an example of personal responsibility for our attitudes, thoughts, words, and actions.
- ♥ Cherish our physical body as the home to our soul.
- ♥ Respect and protect the natural world for all creatures who call it home.
- ♥ Remember, expressing our Kind Hearts is making our part of the world better.

TRUSTWORTHY - Means we keep our word and are dependable. People can rely on what we say because we do what we say we will.

Through e-mail, I agreed to pick up my friend Katherine at the airport and take her back. Two weeks before her arrival, something came up that required me to change my plan to transport her back to the airport. Still through e-mail, I assured her I would find someone else to give her a ride back.

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She arrived and I was there to greet her. After some time together, I confirmed I was unable to give her a ride back to the airport. The news came as a shock to her. Nothing I said could convince my friend that I had sent a second e-mail two weeks earlier; she thought I was lying.

I can be stubborn, and I can be argumentative. But for too many years, being obstinate and confrontational did nothing to resolve my conflicts. And clinging to the notion that I had to be proven right only added fuel to the fire in the disagreements I had with others. Through experience I learned the most positive action was choosing to overrule my self-centered ego.

It was not easy, but the truth was that no matter how much I wanted validation from Katherine, there was absolutely nothing to be gained by arguing with her. Leading with the heart is caring more for friendship than pride, so I chose to let go of my ego's need to be recognized as right. I did not want to be angry with her, nor did I want our time together to be uncomfortable. The only option I saw to ensure peace of mind was to be patient, accept what was, and allow the situation to resolve itself.

A few weeks after my friend returned home, she was having repairs made to her computer when several mysteriously lost e-mails arrived in her inbox. Among them was the one I had sent.

My friend was also right! She had not received my e-mail before she left. Yet, for many months after returning home, she was distant. She was embarrassed for not giving me the benefit of the doubt. She was upset at herself for allowing hurt feelings to invent all sorts of reasons to justify turning her back on me. She was also angry at herself for not remaining devoted to her integrity and to my history of honest and loyal behavior.

Let's Be Trustworthy.

- ♥ Lead by example to demonstrate how to remain loyal to others even when people are being disloyal to us.
- ♥ Keep our promises and follow through on the commitments we make.

- ♥ Do the right thing even when it seems difficult.
- ♥ Keep the secrets people share with us confidential. Let's not betray someone's confidence.
- ♥ Be a good friend by valuing honesty in all circumstances.
- ♥ Work on our relationships by talking things out.
- ♥ Remember, while there may be two sides to every story, there is only one truth between them.
- ♥ Be aware that the interactions we have with people and pets are more important than those we have with technology. Technology is a tool, not a substitute for quality time or direct communication with others.
- ♥ Keep in mind that two people can both be right.

STRONG - In this context means we remain calm, peaceful, and respectful. We don't ego-box with other people.

I was the only person waiting in line one day at a coffee shop when a man entered the store. He completely ignored me and went up to the counter. At first I thought he had not seen me standing in line, so I said, "Sir, the line starts over here," pointing behind me.

He looked at me and said, "You can wait. I am in a hurry," and placed his order.

I know exactly what you're thinking. My egocentric pride reactively thought the same things. *How dare he act so rudely? Who does he imagine he is? How can anyone behave with such calloused entitlement and disrespect? Someone ought to teach him a lesson!*

There was a time in my life when I would have continued speaking to the self-centered man, or implored management to intervene in an attempt to get him to own his rude behavior and apologize. However, I am grateful to have learned the benefit of not reacting or stooping to the same level of awareness that creates a negative situation in the first place.

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I did not know the man. So I let the “nonviolent” actions of the impolite stranger go.

Let's Be Strong.

- ♥ Being strong is choosing to respond rather than simply ego-react.
- ♥ Remember, not everyone is at the same level of emotional awareness. This understanding will allow us to let go of ego-boxing as a solution to the challenges we may face with people.
- ♥ Accept that how we behave is how we feel about ourselves.
- ♥ Refuse to stoop to the level of behavior other people choose for themselves.
- ♥ When faced with a challenging situation or person, stop and count slowly to 10 to give ourselves time to compose ourselves.
- ♥ Work to stay present with what is happening in the moment, rather than worry about some future possibility.
- ♥ Give respect to feel self-respect.
- ♥ Understand that ego-boxing is not worth whatever we think it is (being proven right, defending ourselves, making someone wrong, correcting another's behavior).
- ♥ Remember, refusing to ego-box is not a sign of weakness but an indication of the strength of our character.
- ♥ While we let nonviolent behavior of strangers go, we also set strong boundaries with people in our life who are abusive.
- ♥ Remember, fighting fire with fire in our relationships results in someone getting burned.
- ♥ We refuse to respond to negative behavior with more negative behavior. We bring a higher level of awareness to situations.
- ♥ We acknowledge ego-reacting to the rude and self-centered behavior of other people is actually

allowing them control over us. In essence we are saying, “Here take control of me.”

Kind, Informed, Neighborly, Devoted, Honest, Empathetic, Authentic, Responsible, Trustworthy, and Strong.

Let's Be The Change We Want to See.

If I had a magic wand I'd create a world filled with love, respect, and peace. A world where equality, cooperation, and treating others as we want to be treated is the norm. A world where the pursuit of knowledge, self-actualization, and emotional awareness are lauded above money, beauty, and fame. A world where children do not know bullying, abuse, war, hunger, or persecution. A world where labeling one another by race, sexuality, political party, or religion is obsolete. A world where being a person of impeccable character is regarded as the benchmark for success. A world where freedom to speak, act, and think is balanced by personal responsibility for the consequences. A world where responsible and sustainable environmental stewardship is a fundamental practice.

I don't have a magic wand. But I do have faith in you and myself and our ability to create the world I describe.

You and I make big changes to our world by making small changes to ourselves, in our homes, neighborhoods, and cities. When you and I live the positive change we want to see in the world, to treat others and all life as we want to be treated, our part of the world changes. And one day, I know without doubt, our parts of the world will meet and you and I will see the huge impact of the magic we have cast by leading with our Kind Hearts.

Regina