

On Giving

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Giving is a miracle that can transform the heaviest of hearts. Two people, who moments before lived in separate worlds of private concerns, suddenly meet each other over a simple act of sharing. The world expands, a moment of goodness is created, and something new comes into being where before there was nothing.

Too often we are blind to this everyday miracle. We build our lives around accumulation- of money, of possessions, of status- as a way of protecting ourselves and our families from the vagaries of the world. Without thinking, we begin to see giving as an economic exchange- a subtracting of something from who and what we are- and we weigh it on the scales of self-interest.

But true giving is not an economic exchange; it is a generative act. It does not subtract from what we have; it multiplies the effect we can have in the world.

Many people tend to think of giving only in terms of grand gestures. They miss the simple openings of the heart that can be practiced anywhere, with almost anyone.

We can say hello to someone everybody ignores. We can offer to help a neighbor. We can buy a bouquet of flowers and take it to a nursing home, or spend an extra minute talking to someone who needs our time.

We can take ten dollars out of our pocket and give it to

someone on the street. No praise, no hushed tones of holy generosity. Just give, smile and walk away.

If you perform these simple acts, little by little you will start to understand the miracle of giving. You will begin to see the unprotected human heart and the honest smiles of human happiness. You will start to feel what is common among us, not what separates and differentiates us.

Before long you will discover that you have the power to create joy and happiness by your simplest gestures of caring and compassion. You will see that you have the power to unlock the goodness in other people's hearts by sharing the goodness in yours.

And, most of all, you will find the other givers. No matter where you live or where you travel, whether you speak their language or know their names, you will know them by their small acts, and they will recognize you by yours. You will become part of the community of humanity that trusts and shares and dares to reveal the softness of its heart.

Once you become a giver, you will never be alone.