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# A Lesson in Kindness

Zoey Povlick  
Columnist

All I've learned about kindness can be summed up in one quote attributed to Plato: "Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle." When you truly think about it, no matter how well you think you know a person, there are always things that he or she deals with that you can't know or understand. Everyone handles things differently and is affected by situations in a different way. Every stranger you walk past is a whole set of genes, history, and potential, and has an entire story that you don't know. The reality is that this stranger may have just gotten a promotion at work or may have just lost a loved one. As I already said, everyone deals with things in a unique way, so there is no way to tell what someone is experiencing based on what expression he or she wears on his or her face. We all know people who can be happy all the time and people who never seem to be happy. I have you ever thought about your ability to affect someone's day? The smallest things can have the most profound effect, but keep in mind that this effect can be either positive or negative. Consider that stranger again. What if she drops her books? Do you keep on walking or offer a hand to pick one up? The way you react could mean all the difference to her. If she's already having a bad day or going through hard times, your simple kindness in stopping could be the only reason she smiles today and could change the direction of her whole day. How long would it really take to be kind? It is important to remember to be kind in all interactions, not just faces-to-face ones. I heard a story in the news this summer about a recent high school graduate who pulled out in front of a man on the highway. The man could have easily just shaken it off and considered that maybe she was dealing with more than just driving from Point A to Point B. Instead, he trailed the young girl for a while before shooting and killing her—a rash and extreme reaction for her simple mistake that destroyed any potential she had. She should have been more careful and not pulled out in front of him, but as a recent graduate preparing to enter college and leave her family, she was probably dealing with stress and anxiety. She was met with the harsh truth that many people cannot take the time

to be kind or remember that others make mistakes when they are dealing with their own battles.

If you do not understand how to be kind, spend a few minutes with some children. Watch them play and interact with each other. They don't notice things like skin color or disabilities, and even if they do, it is out of childish curiosity and doesn't stop them from being friendly. If a child perceives a wrong to be done, chaos ensues and the world stops until kindness returns. Why are adults so different? We judge each other because of differences, hide behind screens or false fronts, pretend to be people we aren't, and say things we don't mean. We don't realize the effect we have on each other. It takes only a second to smile or say a kind word. Step in if someone is being treated poorly. Remember that someday you'll be the one fighting a battle, and a stranger's smile could be the thing that changes your day.

## Some simple kindness reminders:

1. Don't forget "Please" and "Thank you."
2. Hold doors for people, and thank people who hold doors for you. Remember, this is the Westminster Way!
3. Retail workers are real people with real feelings.
4. Don't change how you treat people based on how your day is going. If you are having a bad day, take a deep breath and think before you speak.
5. Remember that there is no tone of voice online or in texts, so even if you were joking, it can be hard for others to tell.
6. Be careful with sarcasm. Some people don't understand it, and it can hurt.
7. People remember how you treat them, even when you're having a bad day.

8. Your parents and professors do a lot for you. Be kind to them.

9. Stealing is unkind, and you have no idea how hard some people work for what they have. Don't do that.

10. Be kind to children. They will remember and grow up to model what they know.

Remember: A little kindness goes a long way!



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## Being Imperfect in the Quest for Perfection

Tim Hering  
Columnist

A few weeks into the term, and it happened. Out of the blue, that nagging feeling of frustration started creeping in. It was 7:30 am on what I believe was a Wednesday (I can never be sure that early in the day, so I rely heavily on my planner for this information). We were having our group trumpet warmup session and, with each exercise meant to help us relax, I could feel my neck and shoulders getting more tense.

With each successive attempt at buzzing into the mouthpiece—first in a descending pattern, then ascending—I became more agitated by the sound I was producing. I heard the piano and the other students and tried to blend my sound with theirs, but it just didn't sound or feel right. Was I sharp? Was I flat? Was it even humanly possible to play that low on a trumpet mouthpiece?

Next, we put the mouthpiece into our trumpet but removed the main tuning slide, so we were just playing through the lead pipe. For anyone unfamiliar with what that is, just think of someone buzzing into a metal pipe that is about a foot or so long.

The effect of six people doing this at one time can be described as a small flock of geese sounding out a musical scale and succeeding, or not, at different levels.

I fell into the "or not" part of that last statement, but that wasn't the source of my frustration. It was just one of those days. Henry, my partner's cat, had decided that morning would be a good time to hide my glasses, so I left my house later than I would have liked. It was also foggy outside, so my commute was slower than normal. I felt rushed, and wasn't exactly feeling it that day.

Since I have a class at 8:10, I leave trumpet warmup in the middle, but on this day, I had reached peak frustration by 7:57. I was quick to put my trumpet away and leave the room. I had a few minutes as I was walking to the field house from the School of Music to assess what had just happened.

Did I really sound that bad? I tend to make the mistake of comparing how I sound now with how the others in the room sound, as well as how I used to sound years ago, before I took a rather extended break from the instrument. I need to constantly remind myself of my current progress rather than focusing on how other people sound. It's the old cliché of comparing apples to oranges.

Everyone's journey is different. Most of the other people in the room have been studying here for more than one or two years, and our professor, Dr. Winfield, was also playing along. It stands to reason that they would be better at some of these things than I am.

No matter our major, we are all going to have days when we feel frustration setting in. Fortunately, once I revisited my warmups later that day, everything seemed to fall back into place. My afternoon lesson went better than anticipated.

As students, heck, as human beings, we need to cut ourselves some slack. Yes, we are here to learn and to hopefully do the best we can, but we will all have those days when we feel like nothing is going right. We need to know that is okay. Our peak frustration often occurs well after the actual cause; I was predisposed to becoming frustrated by the earlier events of the morning. I also tend to want things to work a certain way every time, especially when it comes to playing the trumpet, so I will invariably overanalyze everything. If I don't take a step back and allow things to be less than perfect, this causes more frustration.

There are only so many minutes in a day, and we can't afford to waste all of them brooding about a few that didn't go as planned. We can choose to let a few imperfect minutes dictate the tone of the rest of the day, or we can take a deep breath (or two, or three, or more), let it pass, and use the rest of those minutes with a more positive outlook.

## Westminster in London

Patrick Raymond  
Columnist

Hello, I am a junior Music Education major at Westminster College. If you don't see me hanging out and talking to people in the TUB, there is about a 99% chance that I am in the School of Music, since these two places are my entire existence. However, people may have noticed they have not seen me in these two places for awhile, because I am in the city of London this semester!

Every two years in the fall, a group of no more than twenty undergraduate students travel to the city of London for the semester, accompanied by two Westminster professors. Usually students are quite aggressive at securing one of these twenty spots, and sometimes wait in queue by the business office for hours before it opens in the morning to secure a spot. One could compare it to when the first iPhone was released in June of 2007. Due to this, I always thought it would not be worth my effort because of the difficulty I would have fitting it into my tight major schedule. Besides, if it was going to be a complicated process for me to go, I might as well leave the spot for somebody whose schedule better suits it, or someone whose major requires it. However, there were only fourteen students signed up to go this year. I saw this almost as destiny calling me, and signed up within the next twenty-four hours.

We were welcomed here by an orientation process that was drastically different than one that a university might have in the states. It shoved the group into the lifestyle of a central Londoner. Instead of having things like ice-breakers and get-to-know-you events, it was a much more interactive experience. We took organized trips to places like historical Kensington pubs, Hyde Park, local Arms (pubs), attractions with royal significance, and more pubs. Did I mention that there were a lot of pub visits organized by orientation? This was a surprise to me, not only because this was a part of our orientation program, but because it is a cultural norm here in London. It is not uncommon for people to go to a local arms for a quick fish-and-chips and a pint during their lunch break. This ease of culture not only surprised me, but made me realize how things that may have a "bad connotation" in one part of the world may just be a simple part of life in another.

The program is with a study-abroad-oriented school in London; this makes the experience even more interesting, because of the diversity of the student body here. For example, in just one of my classes, there is a group of about five Parisians, one girl from Argentina, and a graduate student from Berlin who teaches languages and is conversationally fluent in six. To add to the interesting dynamic, we are all living in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, which attracts businessmen and women, and very influential people from all around the world to live there. Kensington Palace (which is currently home to Prince William the Duke of Cambridge, his wife Catherine (Kate) Middleton, their son Prince George, and their daughter Princess Charlotte) is less than a 15-minute walk away and causes surrounding reality to cost up to 15 million pounds just for a small flat. This is also a popular place for embassies, with the Nepalese Embassy having an offer at around 150 million pounds. The area in which we study is a very active, lively, and safe place that gets you immersed in the culture very quickly.

Although I have only been here less than two weeks, I can say that being here this semester was not a mistake. I am here with two amazing professors who are giving us an learning experience that is incomparable to anything else, regardless of the fact that it is swaying away a bit from my major track. I also have many adventures ahead of me this semester that are not even in the city of London, and I will have plenty of interesting things to write about in Holcad's columns about this awesome experience.

