SERVING COMPASSION IN A CUP OF TEA

“Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a harder battle” Plato

“A human being is a part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feeling as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.”   
― [Albert Einstein](https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/9810.Albert_Einstein)

“There is no exercise better for the heart than reaching down and lifting people up.”   
― [John Holmes](https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/152507.John_Holmes)

“Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.”   
― [Leo Buscaglia](https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/27573.Leo_Buscaglia)

“Though my work may be menial, though my contribution may be small, I can perform it with dignity and offer it with unselfishness. My talents may not be great, but I can use them to bless the lives of others.... The goodness of the world in which we live is the accumulated goodness of many small and seemingly inconsequential acts.”   
― [Gordon B. Hinckley](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/313356.Gordon_B_Hinckley)

I think we all already know the power of service, the power of kindness---compassionate service. Service comes in all forms, sizes, directions, and dimensions. There can be a deep appreciation for those who have dedicated their lives for their values and in service of others. To name a few: Mother Teresa, Gandhi, Jesus, Buddha, Dalai Lama, and more. The reality for most of us is that we will live our normal lives and weave in it serving others as much as we can. I chose Hinckley quote above because it embodies serving in a different scale I want to bring attention to the subtle and small way to service others that may have a big impact also.

When the heart is present, the mind is focused on another human being, the act of serving is powerful. Hence the title for this presentation. For those of you that do not know I work as a psychologist in an inpatient unit in the VA. When a veteran comes to my office, I offer him a hot cup of tea. If it is the veteran’s first time coming to me, there is always a look of disbelief and a pause. If the veteran says that he wants tea, he chooses from a large selection of tea and he sits down. I proceed to prepare the tea (honey, etc) and I hand the tea with both hands, with care, attention, and meaning. At this time I am serving a human being. Not as the doctor and the patient but as one human being to another, with emphasis on ANOTHER. This act usually stirs something in the room…a care…a honor…a trust. The purpose of the hot tea is many. First, the tea soothes and brings warmth. Tea brings a centeredness and stability in a time of great distress and pain. But the tea is only a small piece of the whole process. Most important is the message that I am of service; this service is to highlight the importance, the value of this human being in front of me. The act of drinking tea together brings both people in the room to the same experience and connection to a sharing and witnessing each other’s spirit/soul.

There are other small but powerful ways to serve others. A look, a hello, or any other way to acknowledge another human being can be transforming, comforting, and transcending. I went to a training last week that was very transforming to me. The speaker discussed one of his clients most happy and loving experience. When he was very small, his aunt, who wore a very full skirt, would embrace him in her skirt when he came into the kitchen.

I would like to take a few minutes right now for us to experience again moments like this from our past. Think of a moment in time in which a small kind act that someone did towards you that you still can feel it today. Think of that act. Remember what was done in as much detail as possible……PAUSE….. Think of any sensory information that was present then (what did you see? What did you hear? What did you taste? What did you smell? Or what did you touch or felt in your skin?)….PAUSE…. Remember any feelings inside of you…..PAUSE…. Remember how much that meant to you and why….PAUSE…. Now with your eyes on my hand, raise your hand when my hand reaches how tall you were when this act happened. I want you to hold on to this feeling and how that act touched you deeply…….PAUSE…… That despite all the time that have passed, you still are positively impacted by that small and kind act. One kind service that never ceases to service you.

To practice serving in a very small way throughout the day with every human being you encounter. The cashier and not only with the friendly ones, with the annoying people you encounter, with the ones that cut you off when you are driving, with the angry customer you are serving, and even with the ones that do not recognize or appreciate your act of kindness. What would the world look like with all of us practiced serving others in this way?