

## HOW COMMON IS A SMILE?

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*“Thousands of candles can be lit from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared.”*

Hindu Prince Gautama Siddharta

Have you ever noticed how many people around you seem to be having a bad day? Do you wish maybe there was a way to make them happy? One of the greatest things in the world, I was once told, was a smile. It would be a perfect world if everyone could only smile.

There is a girl sitting on a bench at a playground. You don't know her problem, and you know nothing about her life. She appears to have tears streaming down her face. You notice that you have a tissue on you. Slowly, you approach her.

“Hey, I know you don't know me, but believe me. Everything will be okay in the end.”

Then you hand her the tissue and walk away. It's as simple as that. What if we all tried to do the simple things to make other people in this world feel better? What risk do you have? No, you can't help everyone, but you can at least try. The world we live in is filled with sadness. Sometimes there is more drama and pain in our lives than happiness and joy. A small amount of effort from everyone can change that.

I don't know about you, but I always feel better when I make someone smile. My friend, Jordan Taylor, experienced this not too long ago. She is a cheerleader at our school, Valley High. During a basketball game, she was told to toss free t-shirts out into the crowd. The crowd was roaring with wild fans, begging to be thrown a shirt. She looked around. An old man was sitting quietly in the bleachers. He wasn't even smiling. But why not? He was at a basketball game where he was supposed to be having fun. In a split second, Jordan made eye contact with the man. She knew what she should do. She took her last t-shirt and gave a gentle toss to him. Both pairs of eyes followed the shirt as it soared through the air. The elderly man then followed the shirt as it made its soft landing into his outstretched hands. His gaze drifted over to Jordan and she gave him a warm smile. At the next basketball game, Jordan was preparing to cheer on her team. A familiar face came bounding toward her. She recognized this guy as the same man who she had given the shirt to. He came up to Jordan and stood beside her.

“You made my day a lot better because you threw me that shirt and smiled. No other cheerleader would do that and it was really nice,” said the man, “Thanks!”

Then the man walked off as Jordan was left with a strong feeling of joy. This joy was not because she had done a thing for herself. No, it was because she made that lonely old man's day.

The little things are very key to the happiness of everyone around you as well. Although overlooked in today's society, simply saying please, thank you, and excuse me matter.

Remember when you were told those words as a kid? They applied then, and they still apply now. Holding doors open for people, getting a shopping cart for them at the store, and even just letting someone in a hurry cut in front of you in line can make a difference in their day.

I was at the grocery store the other day. I was getting myself a cart when a middle aged woman came through the doors. She started to approach the buggies and I realized something. I could save this lady the trouble of trying to pry apart those devious buggies. Instead of taking off to do my shopping, I gave a tiny push to my cart and watched it wheel over to the lady. She looked at it for a second. Then our gazes met and the smile I was wearing was returned with a wide smile from the woman. A simple exchanging of “thank you,” and “you’re welcome” and we were on our way. As I walked on, I thought about how giving up my cart to that lady really made her look happier than when she first came through the door.

This was the exact moment in which I decided that my law of life was to do the simple things to make people around me happier. It isn’t hard to do. If everyone did these things, it could brighten the days of everyone around us. Then maybe the world wouldn’t seem so glum. To my dismay, when I am at school, I see people letting doors close in other people’s faces. Couldn’t they take that extra second to help the other person through? Maybe one day, a smile will be more common because those very people decide to do the simple things.