

The background of the entire page is a close-up, high-angle shot of water. A single water droplet has just struck the surface, creating a series of concentric, expanding ripples that fill the frame. The water is a clear, light blue color, and the ripples are captured in a way that gives them a sense of depth and movement. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the water's surface.

Random acts of Kindness

'Seyifunmi Adebote

Random acts of Kindness



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Random Acts of Kindness: real life stories... a bank of kind ideas to co-create a world spiced with many more random acts of kindness.

Thank you Zara
for inspiring this sunshine story
and for being so kind.

For Victoria and Samson,
my parents

and other parents raising a generation of
kind people.

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**“In a world where you can
be anything, be kind.”**

- Zara Bejmyr

Opening thoughts

Stories are powerful and I have always enjoyed telling, as well as collecting unique stories. Since 2019, through the Climate Talk Podcast, I have been gathering dozens of stories about how young people are acting to address climate change. Now on this book project – Random Acts of Kindness, I have had an incredible experience collating many unique, and humane stories. These are non-fiction, unfiltered stories, the lived experiences of people in their own words, and it reflects very diverse backgrounds, cultural range, age differences, religious beliefs, and social status. The only obvious thing that weaves these different stories together is the random acts of kindness – offered or received.

Acts of kindness are not rare - do they occur randomly? Yes, random but not rarely. It is strange that many of us are fast becoming blind to the seemingly small kind acts that we are surrounded by. How often have we seen but failed to appreciate kindness around us?

I am thankful to everyone who took the time to reply to emails sent, arrange virtual meetings, and chat in person. Thank you for sharing in great detail these stories - some very personal stories and for granting the permission to share their acts of kindness with the world. As much as I would love to mention names, for uniformity, I have tried to anonymously tell these stories of kindness without altering the acts in themselves.

Very well acknowledged is the kindness of Hannah who helped with the project outline, making contacts and organizing interviews; also, I am glad that I took up Ana's kind offer to design the cover page and the book layout. Most importantly, to Folake and Eyi that make up the tripod of my life, I am glad for their many contributions towards my writing is book.

**“How do we change the
world?
One random act of kindness
at a time.”**

- Morgan Freeman

How to change the world

“How do we change the world? One random act of kindness at a time.” Those are not my words, Morgan Freeman said it many years ago and it still holds credence regardless of what part of the world you are reading this from.

Stories of people doing novel things make it to the news, taking numerous twists, trending on various platforms and being beautifully celebrated by millions of other people. Surrounded by these, it is easy to think that these few celebrated folks are those who are indeed changing the world. While that may be true - to some extent, it pointedly leaves the average person with thoughts that changing the world is too ambitious. Regardless, we all can pick the lower-hanging fruit of changing our world starting with one random act of kindness that is within our power.

Believe it, no matter who you are and what you have, there is always, at least, one thing within your power that you can do to change your world.

I hope that the stories and the reflections from the coming pages will not only inspire you but also serve as a bank of ideas to draw upon as you incorporate more acts of kindness in your daily life. Hopefully, very soon, you would be able to say, like a friend of mine that

Showing kindness is more like a daily practice and it is expressed in my everyday expression of love.

“When you are kind to others, it not only changes you, it changes the world”, I agree with Harold Kushner.

**“Kindness can become its
own motive.
We are made kind by being
kind.”**

- Eric Hoffer

Kindness is a selfish act

Some people believe that every time a stranger shows an act of kindness, there has to be a personal interest, selfish motivation or a goal in sight for the person offering. In practical terms, this is seldom true, on the other hand, many people who show kindness do so because they want to and they can.

I must admit, however painfully, that the dominance of unkind stories propagated over the internet and spreading like wildfire in our world today has shaped and strengthened this petty narrative that kind acts are so rare and should be received with suspicion. Sometimes ago I read that “being kind to others is a very selfish thing to do” and I believe it is right. Eric Hoffer even articulates it better, “Kindness can become its own motive. We are made kind by being kind.” On the surface, that may not add up, but I want you to reflect deeply, and recall a time you showed some kindness, especially one that was very much appreciated by, or meaningful to, the receiver. How did that make you as the giver feel? Proud? Of importance? Grateful? Happy? Did

it make you feel like “If I get the chance to do it again, I definitely would!” That is the selfish feeling I was referring to!

I think that as humans - and psychologists may agree, we are more likely to repeat a behaviour when the experience is satisfying, our brains stimulate us, “Do it again! Do it again! Do it again!” and with enthusiasm, we look forward to a next time.

“Being kind to other people makes me feel pretty good. There is always happiness in being a part of someone’s laughter and joy, and that remains a motivation for me to keep doing good to others in future,” a Bangladeshi colleague of mine wrote to me.

Many honest, quality and long-lasting relationships have been built from a singular act of kindness from one stranger to another. Here is how a friend puts it:

Several of the random acts of kindness experienced have defined my relationships with strangers on a

spectrum. For some, I had never met them before the incident and I had never seen them again after the incident. For others, the incident was the first time we met and through that, we got to know one another better. There is the other category of people who were strangers when I experienced their kindness but later grew to become friends, mentors, associates, adopted mothers and aunts.

Over the years, some of these people have been very dedicated to showing my gifts to the world without even knowing me from anywhere. They just felt, oh, this is a young boy doing something ambitious and I just really want to support him. Even though they did not know me, my parents, where I came from... They knew nothing about me and just wanted to be kind.

In the words of Frank A. Clark, “Kindness makes a fellow feel good whether it’s being done to him or by him.” What are some of your “yay!” moments? If you reflect consciously, there is a likelihood that many of those moments are linked to an act of

kindness that you have received, and most likely, acts of kindness that you have shown to others. Maybe this story puts it in perspective.

*On a recent trip to Turkey from Stockholm, I had settled in my priority seat after greeting the two hearty folks next to me – a mum and her daughter. I offered to take a photo of them as they struggled to capture a selfie in the confined space, after which I picked up and continued reading Markus Zusak’s *The Underdog*. They sure would make good company; I could tell and was looking forward to the rest of the trip.*

A few minutes before the flight took off, across the aisle, I noticed the nervousness of a young boy as an elderly woman sitting next to him nudged him. He was courageous enough and asked me, “My sister is at the back, we want her to sit next to us, do you mind changing places?” “No way!” I thought to myself but then I smiled and agreed, it was the last row, next to the toilet, right from the first row, what an exchange?!

As I took out my luggage from the overhead cabin, it not only left the young man proud of himself, the elderly woman thanked me so sincerely and the young girl whom I switched places with couldn't hide her excitement. I felt good about it, but that's not all.

At the end of the 5 hours flight, the amazing couple – a successful realtor and an experienced school teacher, by whose side I found myself, became friends with me. We had a long and interesting chat as familiar folks would, mapping out places we have visited and hoped to visit on the screen, playing Sudoku and Bowling together and in the end, we exchanged contacts. They even invited me to come skiing in the mountains next winter.

While I was just being kind to the young man who wanted his sister to sit next to him, I ended up gaining a very useful contact. It pretty much seemed like it was to my advantage after all.

Though I have no medical findings to back

this up, I have read and heard that being kind boosts serotonin and dopamine and produces the hormone oxytocin in one's body. These hormones expand our blood vessels, reduce blood pressure, protect our hearts, and make us look young.

**“Spread love everywhere you
go. Let no one ever come to
you without leaving happier”**

- Mother Teresa

The willingness to be kind is an act of kindness in itself

Like Oscar Wilde, many people believe that “the smallest act of kindness is worth more than the grandest intention,” I do not disagree but I think intentions themselves when genuinely expressed are a form of kindness.

Sometimes the willingness to be kind to others is an act of kindness itself and it goes a long way even if we are unable to act as desired. That sting of thoughtfulness is valuable and it may be regarded as kindness. Could this be why we say, “Oh, that’s so kind of you!” when someone offers to help even when they do not end up helping out?

With this perspective, we are also able to pause these irrational intuitions prompting us to evaluate and frame certain acts of kindness as “big or significant” and others as “little.” One of those I spoke with opened my eyes to a different viewpoint when he said:

One thing that I think is important to share

is the fact that there is really no way to rate how big each act of kindness is. For me, each of them carries the same weight and I have received every act of kindness that comes my way with utmost gratitude and with love; because no matter how little or tiny it seems, each of these kind acts left an impression on me – mostly very positive impressions.

A mentee shared a story with me where he emphasized how the willingness to be kind in itself is a great deal of kindness, worth more than the giver thinks and it can go a long way to influence the receiver. He was on a trip to participate in an event and his vehicle developed some troubles that got him stuck 100km away from his desired location. Like any other person, as time flew past, he got concerned about how he would reach the venue on time. In that conundrum, he got a call from a friend who was already at the event and was willing to drive all the way back to pick him up. As he told me,

Though I eventually got another car, it meant so much to me that this other fellow

cared about me, was interested in how my movement was going and was willing to sacrifice her own time, take the risk and burn her fuel (considering the fuel scarcity at the time), just to be sure that I arrived safely, in good time and was able to take part of the event.

If kindness is indeed about willingness, what happens when our willingness does not add up to birth the needed results? Well, our best bet in such instances is to still try and maybe become a conduit or bridge. This story as told by a friend can inspire us to be conduits of kindness.

It was 2019, a year before the COVID-19 pandemic. I was running an afterschool learning center. After the first year, it was time to renew the rent and I did not have enough money because the business hadn't made as much profit to cover the rents. So, I had to speak with my parents, my very close friends and people within my network. And thankfully, many of my friends spoke to their other friends about this project.

In the end, we raised enough money for the rent and to sustain the business. While I remain sincerely grateful to everyone, there was one person whose contribution was significant and I particularly received as a special act of kindness. He had seen the post another friend of mine shared on his WhatsApp status about the learning center and our needs. Since I had been previously introduced to him by a mutual friend, he took the initiative to write to me directly showing his interest in what I was doing.

Now for context's sake, I've never met this guy before. His financial contribution was not out of necessity or duty, nor was he expecting anything in return, not even a payback when I asked him. I like to think of it as an act of kindness – a very special one that is sealed in my memory and I would not forget for a long, long, long time because this helped the business to keep running for many more years. It made me realize that as people we can be conduits of kindness when it is beyond our power to directly help as needed.

Indeed, kindness can become an identity and millions of people out there are generally kind, not for a pat on the shoulder, not to be recognized or rewarded or, not to make the news... Many people in the world today are genuinely willing to be kind and it is reassuring to know that.

**“Everyone you meet is
fighting a battle you know
nothing about. Be kind
always.”**

- Robin Williams

Kindness is cheap, everyone can afford it – if we want

Isn't it said that the good things in life are free? Kindness is one of the good things in life but I admit that many times it comes at a cost. It could cost you your time, your money, your convenience or any other thing of value to you.

Sometimes we allow economic realities and our individual issues to radically cloud our minds making us think we have nothing to give, but if you think of it carefully (as I have lately), you will realize that kindness, or being kind to people costs less than you can imagine. Everyone can be kind, regardless of your financial status, your race, your exposure, your health status, your nationality, your social class or your past experiences, as long you exist, you can afford to offer an act of kindness.

Here is how a friend puts it:

I admit that there are times when I am not doing so well and I need a break from the

usual. I have to rely on people around me to support me but I am also self-aware of times when I in a beautiful space when I can give my time, support emotionally or I can support other people. It could be just listening to people, maybe doing one or two tasks for them.

Knowing that people get an improved sense of being when recognized or appreciated is a little secret to being kind. Everyone is looking for a sort of connection with someone else and kindness affords us both – giving others recognition and connecting with, or being recognized by, others.

I recall one cold November morning; I was walking my daughter back from school when a young man appeared from the corner. It seemed like he paid special attention to his look that morning. His shoes, his coat, his trousers... it all looked great and I admired it from a distance. When he got close, I looked at him and with a genuine smile, I said, “You look great...” “Thanks!” was his simply reply as he tried hard but was unable to hide his

blushing face. He may as well have kept that smile on his face for the rest of the day.

This next story shared by someone I spoke with, though simple, it highlights how kindness can be appreciated beyond financial or material items.

I recall my first picture of Kilimanjaro. As ordinary or silly as it seems, I would like to share this story as an act of kindness from a stranger whom I had never met before it happened and afterwards. I had visited Mount Kilimanjaro (the tallest mountain on the African continent and the highest free-standing mountain in the world) and I just wanted to soak in the experience and moment without breaking my consciousness.

He took those incredible photos of me and shared them later on. To him, it was nothing but for me, I truly cherished it. This was a special gift from a man that I never knew.

If we see ourselves as an embodiment of

positivity and like a free-flowing river – not a stagnant pool and boxed treasure – wherever we find ourselves we are not afraid to give of ourselves in little bits, because we see the world as abundant and not as a place with scarce limited resources. It could be simply the deliberate intention to be kind, the openness to connect with other people or offering help where and when possible.

Many years ago, I was building an educational campaign and I needed to onboard some team members. There was this beautiful and smart young lady, she was fresh out of high school. I took the chance to employ her as a typist and built an interest in her. After a few months, she requested a meeting with me where she shared her next steps, including her plan to get into the university and that meant she would be leaving the team. It was a mixture of different feelings for me, but of course, I gave her my best pieces of advice and sincere wishes. Before she left, she wrote me a letter about my kindness and how it has positively influenced her. I was just being me and didn't imagine I had

shaped her life in some ways. From the details of the letter, I could tell she meant every word and this came as a stunning surprise to me.

A few years later, she told me about how her decision about what course to study at the university was based on my opinion about her strengths and inert abilities.

This next story as told by one of those I spoke with conveys three messages that I have repeatedly emphasized in this book: Kindness is cheap. The willingness to be kind is kindness. We can be conduits of kindness.

When I was going to start my first business, a friend and I were trying to secure a venue. One of the options we had was to use a space in the government school. The administrators demanded an upfront payment of one hundred thousand naira before we could use the space. We were just starting so this money was exorbitant for us. Since we really want to do this, we began to talk to different people about needing a conducive location. During this time, someone introduced us to a woman

who just retired from the government school we had in mind. We approached her with the intention that she could speak to the administrators of the school but surprisingly she had a far more conducive space which she offered to us – at no cost.

To think that she did not know us directly, but offered such a kind offer to birth our dream was amazing and it really impacted the trajectory of my life to this day.

Indeed, kindness can be expressed in many other ways apart from money if we want – and we can almost always afford to offer some acts of kindness, even at our lowest.

I like how this person, one of those I spoke with, sums it up beautifully:

I pray that more opportunities for me to be kind to other people will arise. I believe that the world can be a better place if we can all just be kind. It doesn't take anything; it doesn't cost too much to show kindness to other people around us.

In the end, when the expense is compared with the reward, it still can be said that kindness is cheap and that we all can afford some acts of kindness - if we want.

**“Kindness begins with the
understanding that we all
struggle”**

- Charles Glassman

**Want to be kind, but not sure where to start?
Write a note!**

My decision to write this book stems from a simple, yet very thoughtful note - a tiny piece of paper which a stranger left for me by her doorpost. I have anonymously shared the details of this story, among other random acts of kindness stories in the last chapter. Like me, a simple note has touched the lives of many others; created genuine friendships and built lifetime relationships.

There was a point in my life when I was really confused and unhappy about a lot of this happening in my life. On just a regular cold afternoon, I was unlocking my bike after class when someone - a complete stranger, walked up to me and courteously asked me: "Can I give you something?" I was indifferent so he placed a flowery card on my palm which had a message - "Don't worry, everything will be fine... you are loved." It was such a timely note. It took me a moment to soak in the content of the note and as I raised my head to acknowledge who had given me this note and to express

my sincere appreciation, this person had disappeared, it felt so unreal and I never got to meet the person again. I think that was such a kind thing to do and that experience became a memory that has stuck with me.

This story told by a pleasant colleague of mine stamps how a simple kind note from a stranger made a huge difference to her. I could tell by how broadly she smiled as she shared this with me.

In these days of Instagram emojis, TikTok videos, Twitter retweets, and Facebook comments, we are fast losing the art of writing – pen on paper. And with that, comes the loss of the priceless value that written notes carry.

Written notes have such priceless value. A few weeks ago, my mates and I had a 3-day field trip as part of our course activities. It was well-planned, the weather was great and the purpose of the trip was fulfilled. We were informed that there would be a dinner on the last night which interestingly coincided with the end of the Muslim annual fast and the

birthday of a colleague. I was looking forward to the evening and as I thought about what could make the evening special, I approached one of our facilitators, asking if we could try out something though I was still unsure of what exactly this something would be. She responded, “Anything is possible, I just need to check with the others in the teaching team.”

Well, it was a yes, so the evening came and after everyone had served themselves at dinner, the birthday girl (whom I had explained to earlier) and I presented this “something” we wanted them to try. We passed a bundle of paper and a pack of pens/pencils around and made sure everyone got at least one. Some colleagues got nervous thinking it was a graded activity.

The instruction was simple:

Look around the hall this evening and write a thoughtful, kind note to at least 2 people whom you typically do not interact with. You can write more than 2 if you wish, make sure it is addressed to someone outside your circle. Make it

anonymous, no need to write your name but be clear about who you have written to.

In front was a big basket for people to put in the notes and when everyone was done, people walked up to sort through the pile and pick the notes addressed to them. Truth be told, I least imagined how this little something would turn out but it turned out great! Some people wrote kind messages to as many as 10 people – including the teachers. You could see the joy on the faces of people and some teary eyes too. A few weeks later, a colleague shared a photo of how she had arranged these notes and framed them in the corner of her room. I still have all the notes in an envelope and each time I read through, it leaves me smiling gracefully.

We can make it habitual to write kind notes to others, like this colleague of mine said:

For me, showing others kindness is something I am more thoughtful about now and I try to do it in different ways. It could be by helping people in specific ways that I know they need, other times, I do it by writing and sending random messages

just to encourage people or by sending an encouraging THANK YOU note to people who inspire me or just random strangers whose interesting profile crosses my timeline.

**“Wherever there is a
human being, there is an
opportunity for kindness.”**

- Seneca

Kindness should not only come from strangers; it should come from loved ones too

Giving up your seat to a pregnant woman on a train, buying a cup of coffee for a beggar at the entrance of a mall on a cold winter morning, helping an old man get off the bus in the busy city centre, keeping the door for the person approaching in the banking hall, pushing a wheelchair towards a ramp, writing a “thank you” note to the young chap who delivers your pizza on Friday night, offering to accommodate a neighbour who has been kicked out, or paying for a fellow traveller’s luggage trolley at the airport. These are examples of very possible random acts of kindness that mostly involve two strangers, making it a norm to construe kindness as involving individuals who are not known to each other. Of course, it is very well appreciated when folks you do not know are deliberate about you, however, we must not lose sight of how tangible the everyday acts of kindness from those around us should mean.

A sibling’s warm hug, a partner’s birthday

surprise, a mother's nice meal, a classmate's genuine compliment, a father's inspirational text and prayer, a useful job link from a cousin, a video call from grandma miles away, a TikTok video from your Gen Z nephew, a glass of water from your 4-year-old, the listening ear a mentor offers, or a credit alert from your step-dad.... What many more things do we take for granted or that go unappreciated because we get these so often and from folks close to us? Other times, it could be because these patterns of kindness have been formed and repeated over the years, it then builds a sense of overfamiliarity and we gradually begin to see these special acts of kindness from our loved ones as other people's responsibility to us. Perhaps, there are times we get assertive and demand it or take offence about not getting it.

Here are three stories of kindness not from strangers but from loved ones, the type of kindness that many would take for granted.

When my wife and I welcomed our daughter, being first-time parents, there were many things we were unsure of. So, it

was incredibly appreciated that our parents, not because they were obliged to but out of genuine kindness in their hearts, flew down from miles away, and all through the first few months took turns and supported us with every bit of help that was needed.

In 2018, I got an admission to a Masters' program at the University. The University was located in my home state but the campus was located in a place that was distant from my family house.

This meant having to rent a place which turned out burdensome, given that I was raising funds to pay the school fees and to meet my daily needs.

I braced up and gathered some courage to discuss this with my elder sister who offered to speak with her in-laws about my situation. It turned out that they had a family house located very close to the campus and was unoccupied. They were really kind to me and they gave me access to the entire building - 4 bedrooms, fully furnished and at no cost. They didn't have

to but they did and it meant a lot to me.

In the last quarter of 2021, I was in a terrible place. I had a lot of mental pressure and was getting depressed. It also happened that I had just resigned from my job, without any plan about what I was going to do next with my life. Everything was just a mess for me and to cope I would periodically escape to my sister's place. She was living some 70 kilometers away from where I was living at the time and since it was in a remote area, I was able to stay out of touch with the world and all the distractions of phone calls or social media. Without raising any of my challenges with her, she was keenly observant and took notice of how laid back and detached I was. Many times, she called me aside and asked me about how I was feeling. "Are you fine?" "Is everything okay?" "What is wrong with you?" The truth is that I never gave her a satisfying response but I deeply felt how kind her gesture was to me. The fact that she really cared enough to ask repeatedly and was reassuring me that everything was going to be okay. It was so

kind of her!

A colleague of mine during a chat we had, framed it nicely:

Each time that I have gotten the privilege to receive an act of kindness, it reminds me of how interdependent we are as a people and how the idea of a solely self-made human being is a myth. I get reminded that our presence here on earth required the kindness and effort of at least six generations of strangers who became our parents, our grandparents, and their grandparents whom we don't even know and may never know about.

“What we all have in common is an appreciation of kindness and compassion; all the religions have this. Love.

We all lean towards love.”

- Richard Gere

Kindness cuts across religious boundaries and cultural beliefs

How often do we associate being kind with some religious belief, teaching or reward? Many religious folks, consciously or unconsciously may have developed the attitude of showing kindness to others because they want to be blessed by some divine power or by nature. In the course of writing this book and collecting the incredible stories here, I had chats with Atheists, Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, Spiritualists and Non-religious folks. I found it interesting that kindness easily and consistently cuts across religious boundaries and beliefs. I would hypothesise that if we ran a DNA test to reveal elements of kindness in humans, even the supposed worst of us, being human, still has a great percentage of kindness running through our veins.

“Kindness is about being empathetic to the thoughts of others,” this was how a colleague of mine who practises Buddhism explained kindness to me.

The thought of being kind means thinking about helping others – known or unknown. This brings peace to the mind and peace to the heart of the person giving this act of kindness. It feels good when I can help someone even if it means giving a little bit (financially, emotionally or otherwise). This has inspired me to help flood victims in Bangladesh many times or to provide financial help for someone’s treatment.

“Being kind is one of the most important things to me as a Muslim,” one of my mentees told me during a chat.

We are enjoined to be kind to one another, to help someone who is suffering and to do something (even if it is not so much) for others. So, it is very much linked to my religious belief, a passage of the Quran says “Putting a smile on the face of a fellow Muslim is an act of being kind” and this has influenced my many acts of kindness to others.

At an event I attended, I heard another person

who practises Islam say:

Every act of kindness is charity, it is part of our tradition as Muslims, beyond it being a human virtue. This is how we strive to soften the hearts and minds of others rather than win them over to our beliefs.

Another contact of mine, who described herself as “still trying to find my religious path” said her being kind has nothing to do with any religious belief.

I have been thinking about it and I must admit that being kind comes to me as a very intrinsic and intuitive reaction. I wouldn't say it is religious because I think I am rather spiritual than religious or more like I am still like trying to find my religious path. So, kindness is very natural for me but maybe this is a natural spirituality. The knowledge that we have to exhibit kindness and support others when we can. I think what is most important is that in a moment when you can give, then you give naturally, and in your fragile moments someone else gives you something in return. When it comes to kindness, you don't ask for it and you

don't demand it.

I recall speaking with an amazing colleague of mine, while I don't know enough to describe her as agnostic, she is clear about being non-religious.

“Kindness surrounds me,” she described to me:

Many people have been kind to me and I wouldn't say it is God because I am not sure how I feel about God, but I just know that I have received a lot of kindness from strangers. My mother thinks it is because I am always offering to help others when in need and that is why I am getting it back.

For Christians, the bible describes kindness as one of the nine fruits of the Spirit that a Christian should bear. This explains the perspective of a Christian who told me:

I see kindness as a virtue and based on my belief and conviction as a Christian, this practice of love for humanity should come naturally as a representation of our love for God.

Another Christian puts it this way:

Being kind has more to do with my personality. It's more of who I am as a person. Looking at it from a spiritual perspective, I am a Christian and showing kindness is part of the principles that my place of worship upholds.

For me, as a Christian and a spiritually-conscious person who believes in God and God's interest in humanity, my credo is that we are blessed to be a blessing. For context, when I think of blessing, this to me, is exemplified by our access to resources, information, finances, contacts, time, position and many other things we think of as mundane. If we make a conscious move to share these ordinary things of ours with others, only then would we realize how much of a blessing they are. That is a reflection of kindness.

I was listening to the radio a while ago and I heard a Muslim put it this way:

People must consider the thought that everything God blesses you with in this life

is not for yourself alone to enjoy. You are blessed so that you can be a channel to help other people. God has put those resources in your hand so that it can flow to other people through you.

Quite extreme... Yeah? But worth keeping in mind.

**“Kindness is gladdening
the hearts of those who are
travelling the dark journey
with us.”**

- Henri-Frédéric Amiel

Travellers are mostly trying to figure out something, and a kind person can be of help

Planning trips comes with lots of uncertainties – most times, especially when one is going to a place that is distant and different from usual. Even when we take so much time to plan every step of the journey, read reviews, study maps, send emails or make calls to transport or accommodation companies and neatly arrange our luggage to the least important item; it is not uncommon that things sometimes end up going their own way, opposite of what is planned for or imagined.

As a one-time frequent traveller, I took lots of risks while travelling and sometimes I got stuck. More than once, I have had to turn on my hotspot for strangers who arrived in the country and needed the internet to connect with the person to pick them up. Fully aware of the risk, sometimes, I have offered my phone to strangers needing to make a call because they couldn't. These are people who otherwise may have been stranded and these are kind acts that could have implicated me

also. However, the culmination of my many experiences would still add up to the conclusion that people are generally kind.

Travellers are always trying to figure something out. Through simple questions like, please, what time is it? Where is the toilet? Where can I change some money to the local currency? Other times, the questions could be more complex like, could you show me the way to departure gate D? Do you also have a connecting flight to Paris? Or sensitive requests like, I just arrived from Island X, my phone is out of power and I have to make an urgent call, may I please use your phone? I need to pay for a service but my card has been declined, could you make payment (and I give you some cash instead)?

Travelling by car, train or plane, I have seen people turn to me for help in different ways. I have also had to rely on the knowledge, resources or skill of strangers to get by in some situations - even on my most prepared for trips.

This is not peculiar to just me, two-thirds of

those who shared their stories with me shared an act of kindness linked to a time they were travelling.

I think it was on the 1st of October, 2021, I took my first flight out of Africa. It was a long Lagos to Germany trip, with a five hours stop-over in Addis Ababa. After grabbing my boxes at the luggage collection belt, I realized that I needed a trolley. Initially, I thought the trolleys were freely accessible until I was told to pay before I could use one of them. The few dollar bills and the MasterCard ATMs I had on me weren't helpful as I needed to pay in Euros.

Based on stories I had heard, somewhere at the back of my mind I had formed an impression that Germans are tough people and not easily friendly to strangers. The first man I approached gave me some coins and when I went back to him explaining that I still needed a card instead, he just retrieved the coins and left. It took a while before I could find another person who understood my kind of English and who was willing to help. This young

girl, perhaps in her late teens or early twenties, noticed I had no trolley to move my bags while she and her family had three.

Without much explanation, she released one of the trolleys to me. It would have been impossible for me to move my bags from that point without a trolley. Though the trolley was worth one or two euros it was quite touching and special to me as one who has newly arrived in Germany. It was a little, random act of kindness that is etched into my memory.

This next story would pass for a fiction novel or a thriller plot, however, it is the lived experience of my roommate during my university days.

In 2015, after my National Youth Service program, I was requested to support the voting process during the general elections. Since I have begun my Masters' program in another state, this meant I would have to travel inter-state to combine both demands.

On a certain Friday afternoon after lectures, around 12.30 PM I hit the road. The distance between both states was well over 300 kilometers and the roads were not in good shape. At most, I would spend 7 hours instead of the usual 5 hours, that was what I thought!

I ended up arriving in the state after 8 hours on the road. It was a few minutes before 09.00 PM and it was raining heavily, cat and dog wouldn't describe it aptly. After the bus got to the final destination, it was then I realized I had been taken to the wrong location. I was still one hour away from my desired destination and would need another taxi. There was no way I was going to get a taxi in the lonely location I was in – even worse that it was raining heavily and already night time.

As I realized how dangerous my situation was, I remembered that I had informed no one about this trip. The network connection in the area was so poor that I couldn't make calls and I was fast running

out of power too. Drenched, I wandered in the dark and was happy when I saw some police officers, I approached them but they weren't willing to help in any way. I tried to speak with some locals but the language barrier got in the way. After some more wandering, I heard someone speaking on the phone in my native language, Yoruba. I approached him with the hope of getting some help from him.

I got close and as he ended his call; greeted him in Yoruba but he replied in English. I kept on speaking to him in Yoruba since I was certain he understood and that was the only way to convey some sense of 'brotherhood' in this strange land. His responses appeared hostile, "Yes! Who are you? Where are you coming from this time of the night? What are you doing in the forest alone?" – all in English!

"I am lost," I said and went on to explain the details of my trip and how I needed to get to the next town that night. He told me my chances were slim and that no bus would ply that route until the next morning. I insisted I would try, after

waiting some more 30 minutes and seeing that it was almost 10.00 PM, I began to think of how I would survive the night.

In the end, this stranger who at first appeared hostile, offered that I could pass the night in his place. I was more scared than grateful. First, we had to walk a long distance through the forest, contrary to his description of living close by. Secondly, we passed through a place with lots of terrible-looking guys, smoking heavily. 5 minutes after we arrive at his place which was more of a hut than a house, another weird-looking stranger whom he called his friend arrived. I was almost certain that I had been kidnapped. Thankfully, I found a place to charge my phone and managed to send messages and pinned locations to my closest friends.

I could barely sleep through the night; I mostly was shifting my eyes from looking at the time to looking up at the sky and monitoring the two sleeping bodies, sound asleep. Morning came and I tapped the person who had brought me in. He offered

me breakfast and drove me to the bus stop from where I could connect to my destination. We exchanged numbers and I thanked him very much.

Looking at it now, it was like an angel who came in the form of a human to save me. A few weeks after, I was back home and as I shared this experience with my family, I realized this stranger was actually a distant relative, born and raised in the same village as my father. This was unknown to both of us at the instance, he was just being kind to a stranger.

No matter how well prepared you are for a trip, sometimes things go south and likely there will be a need to turn to someone for help. When next you are in airports, train stations or bus stations, if you have the luxury of time, pay some closer attention to things around you and the interactions of people. You could be thrilled by little random acts of kindness that are significantly making a huge difference or maybe you would be able to offer a kind act to someone in need.

“Every act of kindness is a piece of love we leave behind.”

- Paul Williams

Charity begins at home - and kindness too

Someone recently told me that apart from the culture, food and language, one other obvious indicator that defines a society is the characters of the young ones. Children are a reflection of every society and when you see children behave in crude ways, among other possible things, it can be traced to some attention or care that they crave but do not get from home. Sharing a community with children like this particularly affords us an avenue to show these young ones some acts of kindness.

The other day I was at the park. It was summer and that meant seeing lots of colourful clothes, not the black and grey jackets of the winter months. My attention was drawn to a toddler on whose cloth was a bold text that read “It is cool to be kind.” It made me think about how children can be nudged towards being kind. Since every kid wants to be the cool kid, if that means being kind. Why not? However, it is easier for children to be kind, if as adults our daily life mirrors what kindness should be.

My parents are the epitome of kindness and they have influenced me greatly. I remember growing up and watching my mom whom I would describe as 'kind to a fault,' she was always showing up to the task whenever there was an opportunity to be kind to others. Very often, I would hear people complain about her being too kind.

My friend who told me this is equally guilty of the same accusation. He is far too kind.

Here is another story I was told about a young girl who understood kindness and was deliberate about being kind.

On a Sunday morning sometime last year, while I was in Germany, together with my family, we were on our way to church. We had to board connecting trains and when we switched to the next track, my daughter ran ahead through the coaches and decided on the seat for the rest of us.

As we settled in, my little 3 years old daughter called the attention of her

mother to a lonely iPhone right next to her. It was a few minutes before the next stop and we needed to catch another train so I thought we could leave the phone there, hoping someone else could get it across to the owner. My little daughter thought otherwise and she insisted that we try our best and make sure the phone gets to the rightful owner.

From the address, it was easy to tell that the owner of the missing phone was living around that station and it should be easy to get the phone back. So, we went ahead to report the missing phone at the information center and obviously, we missed that connecting train.

What was most touching to me was how my little daughter got so concerned that somebody had misplaced a phone and that the person right now would be somewhere worried about getting the phone back. Her kind heart was touching and it made me think about how our children observe what we do and how we do things, and how our actions influence who they

eventually become. It is easy for them to learn from our instructions if they see that what we say matches what we do.

The story doesn't end there. At the information center, the officer on duty asked me to leave my phone number which I did. Two days later, the owner of that phone contacted me on WhatsApp to thank me. And oh! She thanked me very sincerely. Returning the phone wasn't really a big deal to me and I wasn't expecting anything in return but she kept asking that I provide my account details because we wanted to pay something called a finder's fee which I knew nothing about. Apparently, there is a thing called a finder's fee and it is a percentage of the total worth/cost of the missing item.

In the following days, we exchanged some messages. Since I wasn't going to provide my account details, as an alternative she pleaded that I give her an address for her to pay a thank you visit.

This woman, a retiree, drove down with her husband to my house – about 45

minutes drive, bringing along a card containing a heart-warming letter of appreciation – a little money for my children which she clearly stated was not a finders' fee.

Returning the phone wasn't the particular act of kindness, it was my 3-year-old daughter's thoughtfulness and insistence, her being kind enough to empathize that somebody has misplaced something valuable and that we could help the person even if it meant missing our train.

**“Carry out a random
act of kindness, with no
expectation of reward, safe in
the knowledge that one day
someone might do the same
or you.”**

- Princess Diana

We can attract kindness by being kind

Have you ever asked yourself: why have I received so much kindness in many instances in my life – even from strangers? What do you think the answer could be? Your gender, beauty, location or religious belief?

Before now, I hadn't thoughtfully processed that thought of attracting kindness by being kind, until I was speaking with a colleague. She was yet to find an answer too, but at least, unlike many of us, this was a question she had asked herself repeatedly.

“I don't know why I have been shown so much kindness,” she told me. “At almost all the phases of my life as far as I can remember, I have received random acts of kindness but I don't know why. Once, I talked to my mother about this and she says it is because I am kind to people and always show a form of readiness to help and assist them. She thinks that is the reason but I don't know,” she said with a pleasant look, mixed with curiosity all over her face.

While the most knowledgeable of us may not be able to explain everything about life and how it works. I think her mum is right, we can attract kindness by being kind. Perhaps, this also explains why to kind people, kindness doesn't come as a one-off jackpot and fades off never to surface again.

I spoke with another person who also strongly believes that we can attract kindness to ourselves. As she shared with me:

I am someone who sees the positive in every situation and I appreciate it when people are kind to me. About two years ago when my family was relocating to the UK, we searched online and offline (through the help people) for accommodation. It got very worrisome because a day before our trip we still hadn't secured a place to stay. We decided that using AirBnB for the first few days was our best bet. Just before we got on the plane, my husband and I informed a few of our close friends about our travel and the accommodation challenge.

To our greatest surprise, we arrived in the UK and were welcomed right from the airport by a friend's friend's friend. It was a family of 5 - father, mother and 3 kids whom we had never known or met before then. Apparently, a childhood friend, one of whom we informed before boarding the flight, had silently contacted his friend in the UK who was on a trip but contacting another friend.

They welcomed us into their home and showed us the room they had prepared for us, sparkling clean, bed laid and the heating was just right. I remember clearly because it was a rainy night, I also recall the sumptuous meals they treated us to. It felt like home and we couldn't have arranged such by ourselves.

My husband, children and I stayed in the house of this erstwhile unknown family in Manchester for the next eight weeks, without paying rent. They were also instrumental in helping us secure the house we eventually moved into.

This act of kindness felt so unreal. I know it was a risk and there are many people who due to certain previous experiences would not attempt such. My mindset has always been that I attract kindness and their act of kindness has made me more open, accommodating and inspired to help others. In fact, we decided that our accommodation in the future would be such that we could temporarily host people who find themselves in similar situations.

“It takes courage to be kind.”

- Maya Angelou

What does it take to be kind?

I cannot but notice with displeasure that our world today, more than in the past, is in dire need of human connections, a stronger sense of empathy and the courage to be kind. Courage? Of course, it takes courage to be kind. This was said by Maya Angelou, the famous Poet, however, the lived experience of this Swiss-based acquaintance of mine, puts this in context. The story as she told me goes thus:

At some point in my life, I was not doing well emotionally. This particular day, I was on the train in my home country Switzerland and I was so overwhelmed by how my life was unfolding that I started to cry as I sat down by the window. I had my dark sunglasses on to conceal my teary eyes. The sunglasses was dark enough and it would take an extra deliberate look to notice that I was crying. Unexpectedly, there came this very random stranger who handed me a little napkin to wipe the tears from my eyes. As I collected the napkin, took down the sunglasses and dabbed my

face dry, she just started to share super random things about her life with me, which didn't make any sense at first. But, you bet, she got me smiling that I forgot how sad and tearful I was moments earlier. After half an hour of talking with this stranger, I got off the train with a bright smile and the experience felt super nice. I have no clue who she is. Obviously, we never met again. This was a super random act of kindness and I felt way better after that short discussion.

Where then, comes courage? If you consider Switzerland, a highly individualistic society (similar to most Nordic countries), where there is a high preference to be by oneself and an assumed expectation to take care of yourself primarily. It is difficult – justifiably so, to concern oneself with looking out for others. It would take sincere courage and deliberateness to break the ice by first saying, “Hello!”

Think about how many people, perhaps thousands of them, go around with sunglasses burying their teary eyes and how a

courageous “Hello!” can lead you to offer a napkin or start a small talk that would lift a great burden off them.

Want to put your courage to a test? When was the last time you received a note or message that read: is there something I could do for you? I could be wrong but my guess is that, just like me, you haven't received such in a while now. Ok. Let us flip that question, when was the last time you wrote to someone saying, “Hello, is there something you think I could do for you?” Well, if you haven't and you would like to put your courage to a test, put the book aside for a moment and you know what to do.

**“When given the choice
between being right or being
kind, choose kind”**

- R. J. Palacio

When people are unkind?

I see kindness as an act of showing love, giving a helping hand without expecting anything in return. It is about just being thoughtful and seeking ways to shine some light and spread some positivity to people around me.

Without question, this fellow's perspective of kindness is apt; however, haven't we all felt disappointed when our kind acts go unrecognized or unappreciated? Even worse, there are instances when kind acts are met with the unkindest responses. How do we cope with situations such as this?

I once welcomed into my house two strangers who claimed to have been stranded. Only to realize in the morning after they left that my laptop was missing. They were thieves taking advantage of kind people. It was very painful but this hasn't stopped me from being kind to people that are in need. It only made me more aware and watchful when I was helping.

First, our intuition matters, what is our mind whispering to us? If it means holding back or ignoring, accept it as the right thing to do. Secondly, different people react to similar situations in different ways, usually linked to their peculiarities. As you would imagine, folks who have waggled through life in the most hostile conditions may find a kind act strange at first.

Regardless of the feedback, as much as you can - stick with kindness. You might be the singular person in the world who is positioned to show an act of kindness to someone at a precise time. You never know. I like how this person explained it to me:

I believe that what goes around comes around. So as much as it lies in you, wherever and whenever you have the opportunity, you shouldn't hesitate to show someone a little bit of love and kindness because it is not always about doing something really big. Even those things we think are insignificant can actually mean a lot to other people.

If we all go about carrying our candles and shining our lights in that little corner where we are, it can show the pathway for others to walk in and goes a long way in making the world a better place.

Remember that kindness is a universal language bridging religious, cultural and ethnic gaps. Despite our differences, kindness unites us together on a fundamental level. The smallest act of kindness that comes our way can bring with it answers to probing questions - joy to a sorrowful heart, companion to a lonely soul and in the end, define the core of our humanity. A random act of kindness can inspire and motivate others to be kind, it so easily can create a positive chain reaction. It takes our conscious and consistent choice to be kind - through our thoughts, words, and actions before we can inspire others. In no time, we have people around us emulating our kind acts and together we very quickly can create a ripple effect that reaches far and wide - wider than our wildest imagination.

As you turn to the last few pages, one thing I

want you to keep in mind is that kindness is contagious and it is up to you to pass it on - when you can. As R. J. Palacio recommends, when given the choice between being right or being kind, choose kind - even to unkind people.

**“Three things in human life
are important:**

the first is to be kind;

the second is to be kind,

and the third is to be kind.”

- Henry James

Paying it forward...

Why have I written this book? Well, among many reasons most of which I have earlier mentioned, two stand out. One, I hope this becomes a reference material or a bank of kind ideas for those willing to incorporate more acts of kindness in their lives. The second reason is that being a recipient of many random acts of kindness myself, this is a little attempt at paying it forward.

Where am I today, and the work that I have been doing over the last 5 years is linked to an act of kindness I received from someone – a one-time president of Switzerland.

Over the years, young people like me have been continuously asking for a seat at the table and by that, I mean joining the government's delegation to be part of the UN's Conference of Parties. Very often, we have always heard the same answer: there is no need for young people in the delegation. You can bring your input and we will use it.

So, it was very unexpected when out of the blue, the President's office called me one day and said: "Oh, we would like to have you in a delegation and we want you to negotiate on behalf of the country."

Considering how vocal I have been in calling out the government and maintaining a firm position, it made me think about how kind the president and her office have been to entrust me with such a role that would go on to transform my life.

Now that I have had the opportunity to engage with governors and high-level political figures across the world; rather than just have this on my CV, I am always looking for how I can pay it forward.

I was once recommended for a role, which in turn opened many professional doors for me. At some point, I wrote to the person who had given me this recommendation to express my gratitude and to ask for her address so I could present a token. She simply wrote back, "Pay it forward" and I

have been trying to do that in different other ways.

If you have been a recipient of kind acts, now is the time to think about giving back kindness to the world around you. Pay it forward!

**“Do your little bit of good
where you are; it’s those little
bits of good put together that
overwhelm the world”**

- Desmond Tutu

Random Acts of Kindness

Here are some of the real-life stories of people who had shown different acts of kindness to other people, mostly strangers, at different times. I consider it a great privilege to have been in contact with these people in the process of writing this book, to have listened to their stories and to have their permission to share their stories.

“I think kindness has to do with your humanity and how it makes you feel towards someone. Being kind helps you to recognize when other people are in need and to build a sense of compassion towards them, even if you do not know the person. We do not even need to have so much before we give, but just having that compassion and urge to help can prompt us to be kind in different ways.”

This was how a 26-year-old software developer and the CEO of a logistics company based in Lagos, Nigeria described kindness to me.

It was on a lazy morning while thumbing

through my Twitter feed that I came across his 27-seconds amateur video embedded in a tweet that had gone viral. At the time of writing this, it had garnered over 2M views and had been shared by over 8 000 people – including me. He was not an influencer – just a regular guy, filming what he had seen through his window. What do you think the video was and why did it attract a lot of people’s attention?

His tweet read: “Every morning I see this couple from my office window and I wish to help them with a new apartment. They have been living like this for 3 months since their home got demolished. Raining season is coming soon and it’s been weighing heavy on my mind. How do we get them out of there?” (Link to the original post in the appendices section)

I reached out to the young man, asking if he would be willing to share his story with me, thankfully, he obliged:

I never thought it was going to go as far as it did. I got this office space when I started my company last year. There was a

building behind us before the owner sold it to someone else and they started demolition in December last year.

When we resumed this year, I saw that the building had been brought down. Every day when I arrived at the office and raised my window blinds, the first thing I was seeing was this man and his wife (in the video) staying in the open space, it was not even a shelter of any form or an uncompleted building – it was just an open space. I had seen this several times but on this particular morning, I raised my window blinds and I saw them sharing a loaf of bread and a plate of Akara (locally made bean cake). With no roof over their head, they sat amid their properties scattered around, gisting while eating breakfast. I was wondering about how supportive the couple were to each other and the woman's supportiveness particularly moved me. I stood there for some seconds and thought to myself, what can I do?

As I gave it some thought, I remembered Williams Uchemba who I follow on

Instagram and have been inspired by the act of kindness that he does through his foundation. Then I decided to make a video of the surroundings where I tried not to show their faces but still wasn't sure what to do with the video after recording it, I just left it on my phone for a few more days but decided to post it on Twitter. I wasn't expecting reactions because at the time, I had less than 200 followers and my previous tweets barely got any reaction.

To my surprise, I started getting lots of notifications as people were rapidly retweeting, commenting and liking the post. With the comments, it was obvious that many people wanted to help. I understood the gravity of what I had done the next morning when I opened the app and saw a lot of direct messages from people and organizations asking for account details to make contributions. For this reason, I had to go find the couple and tell them about the post I had made and how people were willing to support them. They provided their account details which I posted online and along with another

post which I recorded while with them.

I was overjoyed to see people sharing screenshots of their contributions (cash transfers) to the account provided. Making some rough estimates, I speculated that the total donation would have summed up to 500, 000 Naira. The next evening, I visited the couple to know how they were doing, ask if they had been receiving donations from people and what the next steps would be.

To my surprise, between Thursday evening and Friday morning, around 11:00 AM, a total of 4.1 million naira had been contributed. I was dumbfounded and thought to myself “Wow! This is huge.” It made me very grateful that I was able to make a difference.

Reflecting on this scenario, I think about how every single action that we take matters and that we don't know what might come out from our littlest act of kindness – especially when it is genuinely done. To put in the God factor here, I have

to acknowledge that it is like I allowed God to use me as a tool to get them out of that situation. Looking at the arrangement, because of the position of my office which was overlooking the compound the couple were in, I am the only one who could see what was going on over the fence. Hundreds of people may pass the front of the gate or live in the next plot without having an idea of what was happening inside.

The last time I connected with this young man, he shared videos of this couple in their new house. It was so beautiful to see!

A colleague of mine shared an experience with me, he described it as “the most significant random acts of kindness imprinted on my heart which never made me the same ever.”

15 years ago, when I was launching my first book. I chose one of the best locations Ogun State (in Nigeria) had to offer for the unveiling of the book. It was one of the best locations one could think of, typically used

by the governor and other dignitaries for only special and very important events.

I went into the office and requested to see the general manager without knowing anyone. This was at a time when people felt that you needed what Nigerians called a long leg, that is you must know people in power to do great things.

Because of a singular, simple act of kindness I had shown, we had a conversation and the manager said, “Oh, that’s fine. We are going to give you the venue for free.” This was a venue that would have cost about 1 million naira as of 15 years ago. We got it at no cost, till this moment, it still feels like a dream!

This experience unveiled a new realm of what I thought was possible. It rekindled the new hope of never giving up when you want to do things. More importantly, it taught me to forget about hardships and challenges that could pose a stumbling block or could hinder you from creating things. Just focus on what you should do right now, and when you get to that stage,

the universe knows how to take care of itself.

As far back as 15 years ago, that was the most significant random act of kindness imprinted on my heart which never left me the same ever.

Do babies attract a special type of kindness? Possibly so? While people are generally kind to babies (and their parents – of course!), not everyone would go the extra mile as this woman did for a friend of mine:

Recently, my wife and I were travelling with our baby on a long overnight flight and our baby found it extremely difficult to sleep. Ideally, the airlines would bring a bassinet for babies to sleep in but she was slightly over 1 year and her weight was beyond the recommended 10kg, it was advised that we do not use the bassinet. As much as we thought we needed it, the airline, in our best interest, did not make it available because it may endanger our baby if she stood up or turned aside without supervision.

In an attempt to make her comfortable, I tried to recline my seat, carried her on my chest, placed her on my lap and tried all I could. She just kept crying; it was evident she wanted to lie down to sleep. Unfortunately, that was not possible because of where we were seated and the demarcations between the seats.

Very unexpectedly, a woman from the other aisle beckoned to us. She had observed our several attempts to make the little girl comfortable and since she was the only one seated on her row, she had to herself the three seats.

She cleared up the seat and like a grandmother she volunteered to play with the baby and rock her to sleep. It was a very long flight and our baby was able to sleep comfortably for the rest of the night right next to her.

It was like she couldn't stand a baby being uncomfortable that she willingly and happily sacrificed her comfort. I don't know what she was thinking but she must

have been moved by compassion to show us such kindness.

As a parent, you want the best for your child and in that situation, the best thing for our daughter was to make sure that she didn't suffer the consequence of us travelling. It was for her to sleep well and that by her crying she wouldn't affect the peace and serenity of other people. I had been stretched to the limit and was running out of all options while she remained comfortable, but one person's act of kindness turned all of that around.

Up to now, I am still grateful for her kindness because I had never met before then and I never met the woman after that incident. I don't even know her name. If I come across her tomorrow somewhere in a public space, I wouldn't recognize her and my guess is that she would not recognize me too.

Some experiences of kindness are so unique that regardless of how brief the interaction was, something from that experience (a name, a smell, a place, a song) sticks to your

memory.

There was a trip I took earlier this year to a country in East Africa. I thought I was prepared having done everything I needed to and gone the extra mile of getting familiar with the local language – Swahili. I was certain I had brushed up my Swahili skills to a level I thought was conversational to get by like buying things, taking a ride to and fro, and checking into a hotel.

A few hours after arriving I was in a situation and soon realized I was lost. Internet and cell (call) services were not functioning properly. To my shock, my Swahili was so poor that it would have done more harm than good which created a communication and understanding barrier.

Lucky for me, the young man who rode the bike that brought me to the location was still within reach. I reached out to him to explain my situation and he was patient to give me the gift of his time and his

translation skills to come to my aid.

The young man, Ali, I remember his name because that's how important it was to me, was not under any compulsion to offer that help considering that we were done and he was almost leaving. He could as well have turned a blind eye, but he didn't. He stepped up and came to my aid and that left a very, very huge impression on me throughout my stay in that country.

It made my gratitude journal almost every day for a week because the alternative would have drained me emotionally and might have bled me financially. That situation, without the bike rider's help, might have made my experience of that trip very negative.

In Chapter 7, I wrote about how airports as a place to be kind. The next two stories present a more descriptive picture of showing kindness to travellers and also being a conduit of kindness.

I had arrived at the Lagos Airport from the

United Kingdom with loads of bags and I needed a trolley to move them from the baggage claim section to the vehicle outside the airport. Unfortunately, I had no cash (naira) with me and there was no way I would have been able to pay for the trolley I needed. No option for card permits either. I stood there for a while thinking about what to do and thought that as a last resort, I would have to move them one after the other hoping nothing got stolen in the process. Just then, a random guy, a total stranger who also needed to get a trolley came by and motioned to me to pick a trolley, offering to pay.

It was so random and since I had not approached him to ask but he could tell I had a need and willingly offered to meet that need. It was really special for me.

...

Less than a year ago, I took my family to an African country. We were just trying to explore the country and at one point, we felt we had seen enough of this environment and wanted to go to another

part of the country.

Someone within the group was kind enough to connect us to an elderly woman, I think she was in her early sixties. This woman whom we had never met before was glad to receive us as if we have been a part of her family and known one another for years. She volunteered to drive all the way to pick us up at our lodge in the distant part of the country we were in at the time and together we travelled to her home.

She opened up her home to my family, made us feel welcome, and introduced us to the best culture the country had to offer at that time. She showed us more than just kindness, she showed us the love that she had in her heart. It made our hearts so warm. There was no way we would have been able to afford that luxury and till tomorrow we cannot adequately repay that gesture.

Even if I tried, there was no way I could monetarily frame it. Money cannot buy what she gave us, that sense of

commitment. Money cannot buy that warmth. It is really beyond what money can buy and we are eternally grateful for her kindness.

....

I remember when I moved over to the UK to study, I was relying on the fact that I had some family members spread across the UK and it would be easy to settle in. It was after I arrived that I realized that none of my friends or family resided close to the school location. Frantically, I was reaching out to different people, housing agents, former work colleagues, WhatsApp and Telegram groups.

I had just one more day to vacate where I had temporarily rented, when someone from a Telegram group chat messaged me, that he was also in the same school as mine and that I could come over to his place to spend the night and he would walk me through the process of settling in nicely. This was someone I did not know before now and he ended up hosting me and my wife for 3 days. He also helped us locate a

nice accommodation which I eventually rented and it was through him that I got my first job in the UK.

Of all the many incredible and inspiring stories about random acts of kindness I have collated and shared; I have chosen to wrap up this book with this particular story.

At some point in my life, I was working with a newspaper delivery company. It was such a daring job for four reasons: I had just left a very prestigious job in my home country; it was an outdoor, night-only shift; the weather was extreme (up to -28) compared to places I had previously lived in; and I combined this with full-time study. As daring as it was, I was truly thankful for the job and also happy that it met the needs of hundreds of customers.

Every night I resumed, picked up the items, did my best to correctly deliver the hundreds of papers or packages even on the coldest and darkest winter nights, and I went back home to prepare for the day, sometimes, I manage to catch a little sleep.

This was my life for many months, I got so used to the routine and very familiar with the houses, so it felt like being on auto-pilot until an eventful night. It was November 17; I had dropped off a newspaper at one of the over 300 doorsteps. It was on the 5th floor and it was only after I descended and got outside the building that I asked myself, “Wasn’t there something hanging on the door? Could it have been for me?” It was very unlikely so I quickly dismissed the thought as it came.

Then I remembered that particular door post had a note that read “In a world where you can be anything, be kind”; this raised my curiosity. I went back into the building, all the way to the 5th floor and indeed there hung a little note addressed to the delivery man and attached was a transparent pack containing sweets and cookies, carefully tied with a blue ribbon. First, it was unusual and since it was written in an unfamiliar language, I had to be sure. “Hej tidningsbudet! Tack för att vi får UNT varje morgon det är så fantastiskt att tidningen lizzer där varge gang.

Hurra!” Google translated the text to “Hello Newspaper Boy, thank you for the UNT we get every morning. It is so fantastic that the newspaper is there every time. Hurray!”

I was broken. I sat down and I cried for a while then I remember my assigned work time was running out. I cried joyfully while working for the rest of the night. What got me so emotional?

It was the thoughtfulness of this person. Thousands of people woke up every morning to the newspapers at door post, but this one person thought about how these papers do not magically appear. This person recognized that it took the effort and to some extent sacrifice (though getting paid) of a fellow human to bring in the daily papers.

“In a world where you can be anything, be kind.” Not only did that quote make its way and got engraved in my heart, but it also became the pinned message on my media platforms and my email signature.

Closing thoughts

Even long after this book, I will continue to reflect on kindness and what it means for our world today and in the future. I also hope that the stories in this book will be shared with children for them to imagine a world filled with kind people.

On the next page is a list of random “kindness” quotes that I came across during the process of writing this book. If you have a favourite “kindness” quote or you want to share any of these with your network, you are welcome to do so on your preferred social media page using the hashtag, #RandomActsOfKindness... I hope it continuously reminds you and people within your network about kindness! Time and again, I would revisit these quotes to remind myself about being deliberate in reflecting kindness at all times and through all that I do.

As fictitious as some of the incredible stories in this collection might appear, it is worth repeating that these are all true, non-fictional human experiences. We need more

random acts of kindness to make the world a better place and it can start with your next action. If I am afforded the opportunity, I hope to write an updated version of this little book where I can collate a broader range of even more striking stories of kindness told by wonderful people across the world.

You are welcome to share your stories or schedule a meeting by sending an e-mail to projects@seyifunmiadebote.com, using the subject Random Acts of Kindness and my team will engage further.

Quotes on kindness

“Carry out a random act of kindness, with no expectation of reward, safe in the knowledge that one day someone might do the same for you.” — **Princess Diana**

“In a world where you can be anything, be kind.” — **Zara Bejmyr**

“Remember, there’s no such thing as a small act of kindness. Every act creates a ripple with no logical end.” — **Scott Adams**

‘Three things in human life are important: the first is to be kind; the second is to be kind; and the third is to be kind.’ — **Henry James**

“Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible.” — **Dalai Lama**

“You cannot do kindness too soon, for you never know how soon it will be too late.” — **Ralph Waldo Emerson**

“Kindness makes a fellow feel good whether it’s being done to him or by him”

– **Frank A. Clark**

“No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted” – **Aesop**

“Let us practice random kindness and acts of senseless beauty to all we meet” – **Paul Keller**

“Kindness is not a business. True kindness expects nothing in return and should never act with conditions.” – **Roy T. Bennett**

“What we all have in common is an appreciation of kindness and compassion; all the religions have this. Love. We all lean towards love.” — **Richard Gere**

“Kindness can become its own motive. We are made kind by being kind.” — **Eric Hoffer**

“A kind gesture can reach a wound that only compassion can heal.” — **Steve Maraboli**

“Everyone you meet is fighting a battle you know nothing about. Be kind always.” – **Robin Williams**

“It takes courage to be kind.” — **Maya Angelou**

“Wherever there is a human being, there is an opportunity for kindness.” — **Seneca**

“How do we change the world? One random act of kindness at a time.” — **Morgan Freeman**

“Kindness is gladdening the hearts of those who are travelling the dark journey with us.”
— **Henri-Frédéric Amiel**

“When you are kind to others, it not only changes you, it changes the world” - **Harold Kushner**

“Be the change you wish to see in the world” - **Mahatma Gandhi**

“The smallest act of kindness is worth more than the grandest intention” - **Oscar Wilde**

“A great man shows his greatness by the way he treats little men” – **Thomas Carlyle**

“Every act of kindness is a piece of love we leave behind.” - **Paul Williams**

“Kindness is always fashionable, and always welcome” - **Amelia Barr**

Unexpected kindness is the most powerful, least costly, and most underrated agent of human change” – **Bob Kerrey**



Author's bio:

Seyifunmi is a Nigerian communication professional and environmentalist. In different ways, he explores environmental communication and contributes to various projects. His writings, analysis and reports - particularly on climate change have been featured on many international platforms. He hosts the Climate Talk Podcast, a platform that educates an average of 5, 000 listeners monthly about various environmental topics. Before now, Seyifunmi was the Communication and Promotion Officer for the Embassy of Sweden, Abuja. He currently lives with his family in Uppsala, Sweden where he is also studying a master's program in Environmental Communication and Management at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences.

OTHER BOOKS BY THE AUTHOR:

**If tomorrow never comes,
A quarter to a century**

**Proverbs; words from my mother
and how they shaped me.**

**Words in Red:
An anthology.**



A book everyone should read.

Mats Rydhede

This! This is a movement! A powerful message, and call to action that makes you want to jump out of bed to be kinder right now. I can imagine this work - your call to intentionally go out of one's way (even if small) to be human - becoming your life's work! Indeed, in a world where you can be anything, be kind!

John Adedigba

It is nice to read about the good things real people do for a change. I am inspired by the different ways people perceive or describe kindness. It leaves me with a hopeful feeling.

Ana Mutis

...such a positive force and truly inspirational!

Mini Neufeld

This is a rich book. From the first page, I was jotting down new ideas...

Oluseyi Fashakin

Seyifunmi Adebote's *Random Acts of Kindness* is a welcomed jolt from our preoccupation with life and ambition. A jolt to look up, to around us and become intentional about seeing the many little ways we can make a huge difference in the lives of people around us. Through the real-life stories he delicately narrates, he urges us to learn that kindness in itself can be fulfilling.

Folake Adebote

It's a book that tells us how little acts of kindness can create big impact

Usman S.A

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