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everal years ago, I was deeply touched by the movie, *Pay It Forward*. The film is the story of an 11-year-old boy,

Trevor, given a social studies assignment to think of and implement an idea that will change the world. From this challenge, the concept of "pay it forward" was born. The essence of "pay it forward" is that when someone does an act of kindness for you, rather than paying them back, you do something kind for three other people who will, in turn, do something kind for three more people, thus creating a ripple effect of good will. From a very early age, we're taught that kindness and compassion are important virtues. (Remember the bumper sticker that read, "Practice random acts of kindness"?) If you're a religious person, you're probably aware that compassion is at the heart of every great religious tradition but what, exactly, is compassion and how does it fit into our everyday lives?

Compassion is much more than just feeling sorry for someone. It's a mental attitude based on the wish for others to be free of their suffering, and associated with a sense of commitment, responsibility and respect for others. Interestingly, scientific research is now confirming that acts of kindness are not only good for the recipient, but good for the doer and for the world in general.

Several years ago, I had the opportunity to experience the "pay it forward" effect in my own life. While working as a psychologist, I donated quite a lot of time to an 11-year-old boy named Danny, who was referred for truancy and possible drug involvement. At age 12, he was arrested for using and selling drugs, and placed in juvenile detention. I lost track of Danny until 10 years later when I received a call that was one of the highlights of my life. The caller said, "Mrs. Daisy, this is Danny I want to tell you that I'm five years clean and sober, have a good job, attend AA regularly and I'm working a good program. You believed in me and planted the seeds for a better life. Now I want to spend my life doing the same for young boys struggling like I did."

Helping others can satisfy our basic human need for connecting with others, as well as have a positive effect on our emotional and physical health. I love the study by David McClelland, a psychologist at Harvard University, who demonstrated that even when we simply view compassionate acts, we experience an increase in immunoglobulin-A, an antibody that can help fight respiratory infections. (I get my personal immunoglobulin-A fixes by watching re-runs of Steven Spielberg's beautiful movie, *ET: The Extra-Terrestrial*, and it's more fun than taking Vitamin O)

There are many other studies demonstrating the benefits of kindness, but in the end, we don't need to rely on experiments and surveys to confirm the real value of compassion and acts of kindness. We can witness on a daily basis the close links between a caring, generous spirit, and personal happiness in our own lives and in the lives of those around us.

In the words of the Dalai Lama, "World economies are always tenuous, and we are subject to many losses in life, but a compassionate attitude is something we can always carry with us." If we make our best efforts to be kind and to cultivate compassion then, at the end of the day, we can say we have done our best to make the world a more loving place for ourselves and our children.

10 SIMPLE ACTS OF KINDNESS

Each of us can find many ways to make the world a nicer, more loving place. There are no specific "how-to's." The key is that your actions come from the heart. Here are some of my favorite ideas for practicing kindness:

1. Remember to say, "I love you" to those who mean the most to you, and most of all, mean it.	6. Resist the urge to criticize.
	7. Send an anonymous contribu-

2. Each day, tell at least one person something you like, admire, or appreciate about them.

3. When someone says something kind to you, make sure you pass that kindness to someone else.

4. If you receive an unexpected smile, put a smile on your face as a gift to the next person you see.

5. Choose being kind over being right.

tion to a charity of your choice.

8. If you're short on money, give the gift of time. Offer to make a needed repair, call someone you think might be lonely, surprise someone with a home-cooked meal.

9. Spend a moment every day thinking of someone to thank.

10. My personal favorite — Go online each day to www.thehungersite.com or www.theanimalrescuesite.com and click to give FREE food and care.