

Purpose: Make a difference

July 2015 Newsletter



It's the dents that count

Your kids can make a difference this summer

Our ideas about getting old are... getting old

e-Thoughts —
Does anyone notice what I did?



Steve Jobs' goal was to make a "dent in the universe." See what we can all learn from his way of thinking. **More...**



Summer gives kids a break from school schedules. It's the perfect time for them to use their talents and energies to help others. **More...**



When is someone "old"? Recent surveys show that many of our ideas about aging are changing. **More...**



How do we know if our efforts to make a difference really matter? Here's one way of looking at it... **More...**

Getting help

Confidential support, information and resource referrals are available for a variety of concerns — both work and personal. Call for assistance for you, your household members or your adult children under age 26, whether they live at home or not. Call or visit us online today!

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“We’re all here to put a dent in the universe.”¹ That’s a quote from Apple co-founder Steve Jobs.

Most people would agree that Jobs did a lot more than create a dent. He helped change communication, technology and the world forever. Yet isn’t it interesting that his goal was just to make a dent?

Everyone can make a dent in the world

Dents are small. They’re not earthshaking, expensive or remarkable. You can make dents in countless ways during your daily routine. Here are just a few suggestions:

1. Hold the door for an elderly person or a mom with a stroller when you enter or leave a department store.
2. Invite the person behind you in the grocery line to go ahead of you.
3. Say a sincere “thank you” to your waiter or waitress in a restaurant.
4. Offer your seat to someone who needs it when you’re riding a bus or subway.
5. Remember to say “please” when you ask for something, even if you’re asking a total stranger.
6. Let the driver behind you take that great parking space you just found.
7. Teach someone to do something instead of doing it for them.
8. Let someone cut in front of you when you’re in heavy traffic.
9. Leave a gift card (\$5) on a bench in the park or mall. Put it in an envelope that says “Surprise! This is for whoever finds it!”

10. Pay the toll for the person in the car behind you on the highway.
11. When a friend needs to talk, just listen without judging or offering solutions.
12. Stop by a nursing home and leave a bouquet of flowers.
13. Compliment a stranger.
14. Put your change in the “penny pot” for the next customer.
15. Choose a few items from your closet that you haven’t worn in ages, bag them and put them into a clothing drop box.

Every small act counts

You may never know the difference your action makes. As businessman and philanthropist Warren Buffet said, **“Someone is sitting in the shade today because someone else planted a tree a long time ago.”²**

Any small gesture you make can have an impact today or later on. Think about it: Haven’t there been times someone has said or done something for you that really turned your day – or life – around?

Focus on those dents

It would be nice if we could all change the world. But if you can’t, that doesn’t mean you should stop trying to make a difference. Every small act of generosity and kindness can really make a change. And who knows who’ll be sitting in the shade of your tree someday?

^{1,2}www.brainyquotes.com

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Summer gives kids a break from homework, tests and school schedules. It's also a good time for them to use their talents and energies to help others.

Kids of all ages can do this. And there's a big benefit for them: Helping others builds new skills, self-esteem and a sense of generosity. Here are just a few ways your kids can make a difference this summer:

- 1. Make get-well cards for kids who are sick.** Even little kids can create cards that send happy, hopeful messages to children who are ill. You can drop them off in the Social Services office at a nearby hospital.
- 2. Help out at the local animal shelter.** Call your local shelter or pet adoption agency to find out if your children can volunteer. Kids will enjoy – and learn—from helping animals in need.
- 3. Visit older adults who are homebound.** Are there older adults in your own family who could use weekly visits? Would your kids like to help run a game of bingo or trivia at a local assisted living facility?
- 4. Plant and care for a tree.** Visit <http://treemusketeers.org> to learn about the positive impact of planting just one tree.
- 5. Volunteer at a local food pantry or soup kitchen.** Kids may be able to stock shelves, pack food bags or boxes, set tables or clean up.
- 6. Write or make care packages for service members.** Help your kids send “thank you” notes or cards to our troops and veterans. They can also make care packages with snacks, toothbrushes, hats and other small items. Read about ideas for letters, cards and care packages at www.operationgratitude.com.
- 7. Collect money for a good cause.** Help your kids find a charity they'd like to support and make flyers that outline their goal. Then they can set up a lemonade stand or offer to pull weeds, rake leaves or walk the dog for trusted neighbors. In return, their “customers” give a donation of a few dollars. Your kids collect the money and you can help them send it to their chosen charity with a check or money order.
- 8. Take part in a walk or run.** There are many fundraising and awareness events in the summer. Take your child's age and ability into account and try to find an event you can do as a family.
- 9. Clean up a beach or park.** Have your child invite a few friends for a clean-up day. Bring gloves and trash bags. After picking up trash, let them play. They'll enjoy the clean space they've just created.
- 10. Send emergency aid to other kids.** Contact your local Red Cross (www.redcross.org) to find out what your kids can do to help other kids who've been affected by hurricanes, floods and other disasters.

Don't forget to praise your kids for their efforts. You'll help them start a lifetime practice of giving back!

Our ideas about getting old are... getting old

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When is someone “old”? Renowned businessman Bernard Baruch once said, “To me, old age is always fifteen years older than I am right now.”¹ Recent surveys show that most Americans are on the same page.

- The Pew Research Center reports that only 21% of Americans between ages 64–75 say they feel old.²
- Only 35% over age 75 would refer to themselves as old.³
- A Harvard study found that 55 to 74-year olds feel about 12 years younger than their real age.⁴

Living longer and better

Statistics show that men who’ve reached age 65 can hope to live to 84.3. Women who are 65 may live to 86.6.⁵ And those are just averages. Many people live well into their nineties (and beyond!)

Medical advances, our focus on fitness and healthy diets are surely part of these numbers. But there’s more. Many people who are basking in their golden years have positive attitudes, connections to others and a sense of purpose.

- **Positive attitudes.** People who still think “old” equals “sick” or “frail” aren’t likely to feel good about getting older – or about the older people in their lives.

It’s important to develop positive ideas about aging. If you want to — and can — you should expect to live a full life no matter what your age. That could include working, traveling, playing games and sports, going out to restaurants and shows and being in intimate relationships.

Want to feel ageless? Do the things that make you happy. Work to overcome fears and negative stereotypes about aging and enjoy every day.

- **Connections.** As people get older, they’re more likely to experience loss. People who feel lonely may be more likely to neglect good self-care. They may become depressed. They might not stay as mentally sharp as those who are involved and active.

Older adults benefit greatly from social connections. In fact, staying engaged with others can help maintain both physical and mental health.⁶

Why? Social bonds build trust and caring. Having other people in your life means you watch out for them and they watch out for you. Having that support system is invaluable.

- **A sense of purpose.** We all want to matter. Having purpose gets you out of bed each morning. You have goals to achieve and reasons to be included with friends, family members and your community. Purpose helps you feel inspired and fulfilled.

Join the new wave

If your senior years are still far in the future, think about what you can do to help older adults stay connected and important. Remember, with luck, you’ll be part of that group one day.

If you’re already an older adult, keep on keepin’ on!

¹www.brainyquote.com

^{2,3,4}www.aplaceformom.com

⁵www.ssa.gov

⁶www.gretergood.berkeley.edu

e-Thoughts — *Does anyone notice what I did?*

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Our e-Thoughts feature provides close-up views on topics and areas of interest from everyday life.

As a Baby Boomer, I marched, protested and “sat-in” for all the important causes of the 1960s and 70s. I wasn’t exactly a hippie: My father always warned that if he saw me carrying protest banners on the TV news, he’d stop paying my college tuition! But I still had a strong social consciousness.

Through the years, I’ve always tried to do things that are generous, kind and constructive. I’ve donated, volunteered and given my time to good causes. I’ve taught my children to be giving.

But lately, I’ve started to wonder if anyone sees anything I’ve done. Or if there’s any difference in the world because of my actions. Are there fewer starving children because of my donations? Is there less disease, war or poverty because I gave my time and energy?

I’m not certain. But I did come up with one important answer: the only person who really needs to know what I did is me. I’m the one who needs to feel that my life was about more than just me. I’m the one who needs to know I gave it my all.

If you ever wonder if your efforts make a difference, consider what Michael Jackson sang about in the “Man in the Mirror.” The person you see in the mirror every day is the only person who really needs to know what you did and how hard you tried.

You may not make it into a hall of fame or history book. But if you did your best to make the world a better place, you made a difference.

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