



A Cup of Kindness

I'VE NEVER BEEN A HUGE FAN OF COFFEE, BUT I AM a huge fan of kind people.

The not liking coffee part is a little weird for someone from this neck of the woods, where there is a coffee stand or Starbucks within a two minute drive of anywhere, at all times, but tea has always been more of my, well...cup of tea.

I do enjoy the occasional latte, and sometimes in the winter when it is freezing, I'll drink coffee in a restaurant, just to warm up, but it is usually khaki colored, after I add enough Half & Half to drown out the coffee taste. So, while I am not a huge fan of coffee, I am, as I said, a huge fan of kind people. And Dutch Bros. coffee stands have an ample supply of both – coffee and kind people.

There is a Dutch Bros. located a few blocks from our office, which I drive past every morning. On a whim, a little over a year ago, I decided to get a latte, so I worked my car into the left lane and turned into the driveway, which had more cars in line than did the lane of traffic I had just left.

As I finally rolled up to the window, for my turn, I don't even remember what I ordered, nor what it tasted like, but I do remember the person who helped me. He was beaming with a genuine smile and greeted me with a cheery hello and a comment about what a great day it was. "I'm so happy to be here," he said before relaying my drink order to his coworkers. As they steamed the milk and pulled the shot of espresso, he asked what was on my plate for the day, what I did for work, and what my name was. "Blythe? That is a cool name!" he said. "I hope you have the best day, today Blythe," he said as he handed the drink to me through the window, along with a partially prefilled punch card that was meant to turn me into a loyal customer. I didn't need the card. I

had been shown kindness and genuine joy, and it made me want to go back just for that.

Every single employee I have encountered at Dutch Bros. is consistently upbeat, cheerful and kind – something not always found in customer service, especially at an early hour of the morning. There is something about upbeat, cheery people that is contagious - in a good way.

The experience was so positive, I became somewhat of a Dutch Bros. regular, stopping in on Mondays, not because I like coffee, but because I like the guaranteed positive encounter as a way to start my week. Attitudes make a difference.

It is amazing the power that kindness and a positive attitude can have in our lives. It seems like we are stretched so thin in our daily lives that kindness often gets lost in the shuffle. How much easier is it to keep talking on the cell phone while standing at the checkout counter, then to turn off your phone - or at least take it away from your ear – and focus on the person in front of you? Sharing a smile with someone whose path you cross, or complimenting them on something minor, can lift them straight up, in spirit, but do we always do it?

What if we initiated a challenge for the next month to see who could be the kindest to others? How do you think your life – and the lives of those around you – would change for the better if you went out of your way to shower them with kindness?

I'm not talking about insincere compliments or empty flattery, but I'm talking about putting their needs and feelings first, taking a moment out of your busy day to make them feel important, or finding one kind thing to say that will boost their spirits. Everybody likes hearing they look nice, or their work on a project was appreciated, or their sweater brings out their eye color. There is always something to find that is a positive, but how often do we take the time to actually say it? It may not mean much to us, but it can mean the world to someone else.

One of my coworkers gave me the book *The Go-Giver*, to read, in which the main character, Pindar, shares this bit of wisdom with his protégé: "What you focus on is what you get ... It's true, and not only about trouble. It's true about *everything*. Go looking for conflict, and you'll find it. Go looking for people to take advantage of you, and they generally will. See the world as a dog-eat-dog place, and you'll always find a bigger dog looking at you as if you're his next meal. Go looking for the best in people, and you'll be amazed at how much talent, ingenuity, empathy and goodwill you'll find. *Ultimately, the world treats you more or less the way you expect to be treated.*"

What if we went out looking for the best in people each day? Would we find it? What if, rather than approaching those we work with, struggle with, and have relationships with, as forces to be dealt with, we looked at them as people we could help? What if we set out looking for the best in them, and helped bring it out by being kind?

We have the choice in life of what we get: to live happy, expecting the best, and helping others to experience their best, or we can live focused on ourselves, ever looking inward, wanting the best for ourselves, and not really caring much about others. Putting others first, actually puts us first. Helping others helps us. Lifting others up lifts us up too.

Up for the challenge, but not sure how to start? Why not buy someone a cup of coffee? I know a great place you can go.

Happy reading!

Blythe