

Come Back Home

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Love and kindness are the virtues I choose to live by. I believe by living a morally upright life, you will reap the rewards. Just recently, I had experienced the kindness of a stranger. I looked helplessly around. I couldn't pay for my subway fare with my phone. This had been a consistent problem over the week, but I had forgotten to bring cash this time. I began to sweat nervously, and without speaking, I locked eyes with a woman. She looked at me and asked if I needed a swipe. I nodded, and she led me to the turnstile and swiped her metro card. The first words out of my mouth were a firm thank you, and she left smiling without asking for anything in return. I thought to myself, and my husband reiterated after I recounted the story how lucky I had been. However, a couple of months ago, I did the same thing for an older lady and her daughter, who were experiencing the same problem. It wasn't luck. It was my kindness coming home to me. Your kindness might seem limited and fleeting, but it comes back when you need it most.

I define ren as being open and receiving, soft and gentle, and putting the goodness you wish to see into the world. There aren't huge acts of kindness and love that I can declare in my life, but I think the incremental acts can and do significantly impact your life—for example, I organized a bake sale for a friend in a homeless shelter. I raised 1000 dollars as a junior in high school. I participated in the Veteran's Day parade and talked to veterans about their experiences while most people turned away. I bought a water bottle for a fencing club member who kept coming out to get water from the fountain, and I didn't even belong to the fencing club. I gave a cat on the street food and belly rubs because they kept coming to my doorstep. As a reminder, I also helped a mother and daughter when they needed a MetroCard swipe.

All these acts made me feel like I had a purpose and was doing something worthwhile. Somehow, it felt great even though I didn't receive anything in return besides gratitude. I have

never openly shared these moments with anyone, but when you practice love and kindness, you affect yourself and those around you. Some may take your benevolence for granted but know it is like a boomerang waiting to return. There is a Chinese myth about a man named Chung, “The rumors of Chung’s generosity had traveled further than he has ever dreamed of. Several reports of the noble deeds that he was constantly performing had reached the Immortals in the Western Heaven. As they are profoundly concerned by the doings of mankind, steps were taken so that Chung would not go unrewarded” (The Reward of a Benevolent Life). Benevolence, while seemingly unconnected, is often connected to a higher power, for there are things that can never be fully explained. Connections may only become apparent after receiving someone's kindness.

Concerning love and benevolence, I believe you learn from those who raise you. Chung’s son Keng was also benevolent like his father; however, his adopted son did not follow in his footsteps. Ultimately, this shows you choose the significance of your experiences; otherwise, everyone who lived through similar experiences would be the same. Keng and Lo-Yung, the adopted son, would be equal reflections of Chung. However, that was not the case. Unlike Chung, my mother was cold and distant; therefore, from my experiences of being ignored, I concluded that love was elusive and something to crave. However, I did not want others to feel they had to beg for my love and kindness; therefore, I gave it out freely and widely. Limiting your love and kindness makes for a cold and empty world. Confucius believed the world would be cruel and, worse, thrown into chaos with a lack of *ren*.

*Ren* is what makes a person human and life worth living. It can be translated as "humaneness" or "goodness." The goal of everyone should be to achieve *ren*. Confucius calls a person who achieves *ren* a ‘superior person,’ ‘ideal person,’ or ‘sage.’ To become a superior person, a person

must do the right things. One of the right things is *yi*, doing one's duties. Confucius saw everyone as having a duty to everyone else. When asked for a single idea to guide a person's actions, he answered, "What about fairness? What you don't like done to yourself, don't do to others (Hobbes).

If everyone acts according to their duty, the country and this world will return to an era of stability, prosperity, and peace. You can create peace for your community with love and goodness.

Yet love and kindness are hard to give to everyone, especially your enemies. Although Confucius did not mention your enemies, I think it's essential that love and kindness should include them. Loving those who are good is easy, but loving your enemy is challenging. This moral righteousness is something modern society lacks. We have forgotten to turn the other cheek and love our enemies. Love and kindness may not always be the remedy we seek, but sometimes it is. Ethically, it would be best to be consistent because your virtues aren't selective. You can't pick and choose when to be righteous. You must always be virtuous. I've had my share of enemies and adversaries. Where people wish for my downfall or misfortune. However, I believe the kindness you can gift them is your absence. Love doesn't mean hugging them or keeping close contact but instead not speaking their name with ill intention, keeping them from your thoughts. In the Bible, a view taken in this regard is to turn the other cheek to give your enemy your coat. God will take care of your enemies for you, much like Keng's enemies were taken care of for him at the end of his tale because of his benevolent nature, which he learned from his Father.

In my situation, I was disregarded for group activities; I was a mere afterthought for my coworkers, who I had thought were my friends, and I was only invited after the fact. Still, I did not wish them harm and continued working with them. However, coldness and being ignored led me to believe I was undeserving of love again. I thought, had I done something wrong? Had I offended them? However, I realized they should have communicated it to me if I had. You can drive yourself insane thinking of what you did wrong to others, but don't. I think love is essential not only when it comes to others but to yourself. Love yourself enough to keep them at bay. Love them enough to wish them to improve at their own pace. The tipping point came at an event where I was forced to present by myself, and my coworkers, who were supposed to support me, left me alone once again. I realized that their love and respect for me did not exist. I must learn to love myself. I wish to help others and show them kindness; as the poet Rupi answered, "How is it so easy for you to be kind to people... 'milk and honey dripped from my lips as I answered cause people have not been kind to me'" (Kaur). I have not always received it, but I know everyone deserves it.

We cannot force others to love us. We aren't gold coins for everyone to love, but kindness is not only for those you hold in high regard; you must love every stranger and treat them with kindness because that is what you would want in return. Love is powerful, so love carefully, but when you do, love with no bounds. I will continue living by Ren because I want a purposeful life where I feel fulfilled not by money or achievements alone but with love and the goodness I give to others, which ultimately comes back home to me.

Work Cited

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