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01/08/2008

Coach's Corner: Kindness costs so little

By: Sharon Pahlka , Journal Newspapers

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Yesterday, the woman ahead of me at the checkout counter paid her bill, which came to \$25.01, and I could see she didn't have the needed penny. So I pulled out my wallet and gave her the penny. She turned to me as if I had just given her a \$100 bill. With a huge smile, her whole face lit up, and she said a heartfelt "thank you." I was startled that such a small act gave so much pleasure - hers and mine.

And it only cost a penny.

The experience made me think about how small acts of kindness, thoughtfulness or just paying attention make as big a difference as noble deeds. You know what I mean - things that don't cost much time or money - moments when someone (a friend, stranger, or even an enemy) says something that helps you, puts a smile on your face or makes your day. I found examples all around me just this week:

- * My young grandson was having a difficult day, and his older sister - without saying anything - just took his hand and walked along with him. It was wonderful.
- * My son saying, "I am sorry you have to go through that mom." What a huge difference it made to think that he understood and empathized with me.
- * Thinking how beautiful a waitress's eyes were and telling her so. The surprised sparkle in her eyes made them even more beautiful.
- * A lady with a full grocery cart letting me go ahead of her with my small purchase. I was already running late, and her kindness made my day.
- * Another driver slowing down and making room for me to merge when my lane turned into an exit only. Had I been forced to exit, I could have lost a half hour. The gratitude I felt toward the other driver stayed with me long after I reached my destination.

A great side benefit of making someone's day is that helping others has been shown to bring health benefits to those with chronic illness and other health issues. And studies show that people of all ages who help others on a regular basis feel happiest. So, when you make someone's day, you also make yourself happy.

I am a bargain hunter and am thankful to the gal who showed me what a penny could buy. From now on, I will be shopping for opportunities to make someone's day.

Coaching Question: When was the last time you made someone's day?

Coaching Tip: Make a list of all the small things you have seen in the past couple of weeks that could make someone's day.

Homework: Today, take every opportunity to make someone's day. It could be as simple as putting money in an expired parking meter or taking the time to listen to someone. How much happier do you feel by the end of the day?

Quotes: *"The more good you throw out, the more you receive in return."*
- Josh S. Hinds

"The best way to cheer yourself up is to try to cheer someone else up."
- Mark Twain

Resource: *Why Good Things Happen To Good People* by Stephen Post, PhD, and Jill Neimark.

Sharon Pahlka is a life coach and speaker. In her coaching, she helps her clients live well and meaningfully, especially those with chronic health challenges. Sharon's column, Coach's Corner, offers helpful tips from her work.

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