



ASPAN

American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses

Message from the President

Kindness Brings Us Together

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Do you believe simple acts of kindness are good for our health? Science backs it up! Studies reveal learning about and practicing kindness strongly influence our mindset, outlook, and even our health. In a newsletter published by the Mayo Clinic, researchers describe modest methods which have the power to transform our minds to be more present and kinder to others. The three methods include loving meditation, acts of kindness, and focusing on gratitude. Mayo researchers also point out how kindness slows the aging process, lessens pain and tension, and reduces depression.¹

About two years ago, I was invited to share an inspirational verse with the ASPAN Board of Directors and guests. I started reflecting on the previous years of service as a member of ASPAN, regional director, secretary, and as a member of several committees and strategic work teams. At that time, ASPAN President Regina Hoefner-Notz selected her theme as *'Leading with Knowledge, Serving with Heart'- Servant Leadership*. Her theme resonated then and continues to inspire me to strive to lead with a servant heart.

I believe kindness is at the heart of being a servant and is essential to becoming an effective leader. The book *Wonder*, written by R. J. Palacio, is about a young man named August Pullman, who was born with extensive facial deformities and survived multiple surgical events. In this story, Auggie overcomes great challenges, including horrific bullying and loneliness. This is a moving story about courage, strength, friendship, and kindness. All these attributes make an eternal impression on humankind. In the wake of complex conversations and thoughtful efforts to address civility, I felt this message is appropriate to include today.

So, allow me to set the stage. The scene is at the conclusion of the book *Wonder* and is at the students' end of the year awards ceremony. Dean Tushman says: "When you reflect on this past year, I want you all to look at where you are now and where you've been. You've all gotten a little taller, a little stronger, a little smarter ... I hope. But the best way to measure how much you've grown isn't by inches or the number of laps you can now run around the track, or even your grade point average—though those things are important. It's what you've done with your time, how you've chosen to spend your days, and whom you have touched this year. That is the greatest measure of success."²

In a book by J. M. Barrie called *The Little White Bird*, he writes, "Shall we make a new rule of life, always to try to be a little kinder than is necessary."³ Kinder than is necessary because it's not enough to be kind or civil. One should be kinder than needed. We carry with us, as human beings, not just the capacity to be kind, but the choice of kindness. What does that mean? How is that measured? Can you benchmark it? It's not like measuring how much you've grown in a year. It's not exactly quantifiable. How do we know we've been kind? What is being kind?

In 1989, Christopher Nolan wrote his autobiography in the third person through a narrator named Joseph Meehan. It is a bewilderingly expressive and inspirational work, filled with powerful and moving moments of triumph, sorrow, anger, and above all, captivating wit. In *Under the Eye of the Clock*, the main character is a young man who is facing some extraordinary challenges. There is one part where a student in his class makes a lasting impression on the life of another. Nolan writes, "On the surface, it's a small gesture. But to this young man, whose name is Joseph, it's well, it was at moments such as these that

Joseph recognized the face of God in human form. It glimmered in their kindness to him, it glowed in their keenness, it hinted in their caring, indeed it caressed in their gaze.”⁴

Such a simple thing, kindness. A nice word of encouragement given when needed. An act of friendship. If every single person reading this ASPAN president’s message made it a rule wherever you are, whenever you can, you will try to act a little kinder than is necessary—the world would be a better place. And if you do this, if you act just a little kinder than is necessary, someone else, somewhere, someday, may recognize in you, in every single one of you, the face of God.

In the story *Wonder*, the excitement is building as the dean describes the Henry Ward Beecher Medal of Honor. He says, “It is bestowed upon students who have been notable or exemplary in certain areas throughout the school year. In Auggie’s mind, he immediately figured Charlotte would get this medal because she organized the coat drive this year, so he kind of zoned out a bit again. He looked at his watch: 10:56. He was getting hungry for lunch already.”²

Henry Ward Beecher was the nineteenth-century abolitionist—and fiery sermonizer for human rights—after whom their school was named. Henry Beecher wrote the power of one’s friendship, the test of one’s character, the strength of one’s courage, are the qualities that define us as human beings, and propel us, on occasion, to greatness.

The dean goes on to say the Henry Ward Beecher medal is about recognizing greatness. Greatness lies not in being strong, but in the right using of strength. “He is the greatest whose strength carries up the most hearts.” Then he announces, “without further ado, this year I am very proud to award the Henry Ward Beecher medal to the student whose quiet strength has carried up the most hearts.” The dean bestows the medal upon Auggie.²

I have been the beneficiary of kindness shared by many people within ASPAN. Cards, words of encouragement, a wink, a hearty hug, a meal, a conversation, vintage Barbies, time, support, direction, a poem – such magnificent acts of kindness have deeply impacted my life. Thank you!

In closing, there are more than 13,000 ASPAN members, and even more perianesthesia nurses around our nation who could be lifted by our kindness. ASPAN’s office staff work extraordinarily hard behind the scenes to support the specialty of perianesthesia. Let them know how much we appreciate their gifts and talents. Kindness is a gift of the heart. Let’s make it our purpose to be kinder than necessary to each other, our families, our friends, our patients, and colleagues. Throughout the year we have focused on the things that bring us together. Consider kindness. Kindness brings us together!

REFERENCES

1. Mayo Clinic Staff. Mayo Clinic. Stress Management. How sharing kindness can make you healthier & happier. November 1, 2018. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/how-sharing-kindness-can-make-you-healthier-happier/art-20390060> Accessed December 4, 2021.
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3. Barrie JM. *The Little White Bird*. Scribner; 1902.
4. Nolan C. *Under the Eye of the Clock*. Arcade; 1989.