



How Do We Inspire Change?

ONE MOMENT AT A TIME

As a teacher our job is not only to teach the standards dictated by our state, demonstrate learning strategies so our students become more successful, or enforce discipline so our classroom is safe and a positive environment for learning but it is also to add to society. We instinctively know that a majority of our students aren't getting some basic life skills that will help them maneuver in the real world one day. We also know if we don't go the extra mile and talk to them about these skills or expect it to come from home they may never reach their full potential. There are many life skills that need to be addressed but today, let's cover - compassion for others.

How do we make someone feel compassion? How do we influence people who are so greatly influenced by others, social media and culture? How do we make an impact? I'll start by using a quote. "The seed of everything is in everything else." Anaxagoras. By simply planting a seed. It's a small, itty bitty object with huge, abundant potential that can affect the world. This tiny seed could be just a positive comment, just an encouraging spoken thought, just attention placed in a moment in time – we plant, we garden, we nurture and without seeing the end result we have faith that something will produce. In fact, we will see weeds growing immediately if our words weren't uplifting or honoring or maybe we won't see the weeds because the patch was far more desolate than we realized and another will have to deal with our sewing mess. Whether we are a parent, a friend or a teacher we have to have

to be very cognizant about the power of words and we have to have faith that our wise words will have an impact. We must have faith that our intention, our *GOOD* intention is realized.

After a release of an important fundraiser on campus for a terminally ill student I had a student come into my room and say, “Mrs. Barnum, I saw Kylie’s video. It really upset me.” I said, “That’s great Samantha, now, what are you going to do?” She responded by sincerely saying, “I felt something.” That was it. She had reached the point of ‘feeling’ and that was enough or she personally had reached the summit in her emotional response. I was hit upside the head with a 2 x 4. I realized that for some of these kids just “feeling” something is a HUGE response and that was all they had to give or actually that was *enough* to give. The next question I asked myself was how do I get past THAT? How do I change THAT?

The only thing I know I can change is what is in my sphere of influence. I have control over a very small world. My microcosm of social significance...my classroom, my family, and my friends. I have influence on those that enter my door. I have influence for positive change, for love, for joy, for good energy, for success, for empathy.

Seeds.

Once planted I should water them with encouragement, with understanding and with passion. Not to say I will have my bad days where I lose my ‘ship’ and get frustrated by sauntering late students wearing their hoodies that roll their eyes when you ask them to be removed, sharpening their pencil during lecture, empty water bottles left behind under the desk or the strips of torn paper from wire notebooks thrown haphazardly on my floor (who designed that?) but, hopefully, at some point in my day, I stopped and listened, I gave a sincere compliment that pierced through their negative self-talk and I worked past my frustration and exhaustion and gave this child exactly what they required at that moment. Realizing that I am not this great heroic influencer in the Galaxy of Academia but my goal is that the majority of the time I have a heart and desire to make each and every person a compassionate and thoughtful human being (and they are stuck with me for an hour). Like thousands of my colleagues that do the same, it’s really a pretty good personal goal and THAT’S how we change a culture or at least a life that effects a culture...one person at a time. One moment at a time. One seed at a time.

So, I begin cultivating the soil, “Samantha, sweetheart, that emotion you are feeling needs for you to respond. So, what are you going to do for Kylie?”