Let Me Hold The Door For You

Compassion is trending and it is almost impossible to go a day without seeing variations of “Be Kind”, populating your favorite social media news feed. Just the other day Kristen Bell posted a selfie wearing a t-shirt exclaiming “Kind People are My Kinda People.” Celebrities and educators alike are working hard to teach empathy and show that it is cool to be kind.

Most of us would agree that being kind and showing compassion for others makes us feel good and most likely makes the recipient feel good too. But are we equally generous of ourselves, empathic during a time of need when showing someone kindness and compassion is difficult?

Socrates said, “Those who are hardest to love need it the most.” This is especially true when someone is struggling with their mental health, the pain of addiction or both.

Substance use and mental health disorders can be difficult to understand, especially the actions, lack of communication, and isolation those suffering from these disorders tend to display during the depths of their disease. When the ones closest to us are hurting we tend to take on their negative feelings, making it easier to push them away when the pain becomes too much to bear and actions are too hard to comprehend.

Take a moment and try to understand that the use of drugs and alcohol is an attempt to cover up uncomfortable feelings, such as anxiety, stress, and past trauma. Gabor Mate, author of In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction, explains substance use this way: “Being cut off from our own natural self-compassion is one of the greatest impairments we can suffer. Along with our ability to feel our own pain go our best hopes for healing, dignity, and love. What seems nonadaptive and self-harming in the present was, at some point in our lives, an adaptation to help us endure what we then had to go through. If people are addicted to self-soothing behaviors, it’s only because in their formative years they did not receive the soothing they needed. Such understanding helps to detach toxic self-judgment on the past and supports responsibility for the now. Hence the need for compassionate self-inquiry.”

For so many of us, the current pandemic has revealed what anxiety and extreme stress feel like. Social isolation, virtual schooling, economic, and housing insecurity have led many people to find temporary relief from these pressures. It’s no surprise that online sales of alcohol are up 243% nationwide. How many of us have reached for a glass or two of wine to cope or heard a friend not so innocently ask if it is 5 o’clock yet, the socially acceptable time to start drinking. Instead of alcohol maybe you turn to online gaming or an extra helping of ice cream. We deserve to feel better, right?

This urge to find temporary relief is common. Most of us do it one way or another and don’t experience major consequences. That is not the case for everyone, and it is important to use this common ground to judge less and respond compassionately to those who struggle for a lifetime. We will leave you with a poem called Empathy written by Morgan Harper Nichols, whose hope is that through her work we will all feel a little less alone.

Let me hold the door for you. I may have never walked a mile in your shoes, but I can see that your soles are worn and your bear and actions are too hard to comprehend. During the depths of their disease. When the ones closest to us are hurting we tend to take on their negative feelings, making it easier to push them away when the pain becomes too much to bear and actions are too hard to comprehend.

Did You Miss our WZBG Interview?

Did you miss my interview on WZBG 97.3 with Dale Jones and Maria Coutant Skinner, LCMH, Executive Director at the McCall Center for Behavioral Health?

We will be on this 3rd Wednesday of every month at 8:20 to hear us in real-time.

Let me hold the door for you. I may have never walked a mile in your shoes, but I can see that your soles are worn and your strength is torn under the weight of a story I have never lived through, it’s the least I can do. —Morgan Harper Nichols.

If you are suffering, don’t be afraid. Pick up the phone and give us a call. We are here to help. (860) 496-2100.