

## The Ripple Effects of Kindness

*The most difficult part of expressing love and kindness to others is when the other person doesn't deserve it.*

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Picture this: you're sitting at a quiet pond, there is no wind to disturb the stillness, and the water is crystal clear. Suddenly, you throw a rock into the water and it creates ripples that spread out over the entire surface. It's a beautiful experience and it's also a great metaphor for how our actions affect other people. When we throw our hate or anger into the world, that feeling ripples out to not only the people immediately around us, but the people that surround our circle, and so on. On the flip side, when we throw [kindness](#) and love out into the world, that feeling also ripples out to places, or people, we may never know about.



The Ripple Effects of Kindness

We have a tendency to think that our actions only affect the people that we direct them to, but I believe the impact of our actions extends out further than we would ever know. Once we recognize and accept that, we can begin being more thoughtful about our actions and words.

Let's think about this on a global level. For example, when someone commits a mass shooting the families directly impacted are devastated, but many people beyond those families are impacted by those murders too. The same reasoning applies to acts of kindness and love. For example, when we see Mother Teresa reaching out to the poorest people in Calcutta with love and compassion, we feel that love ourselves.

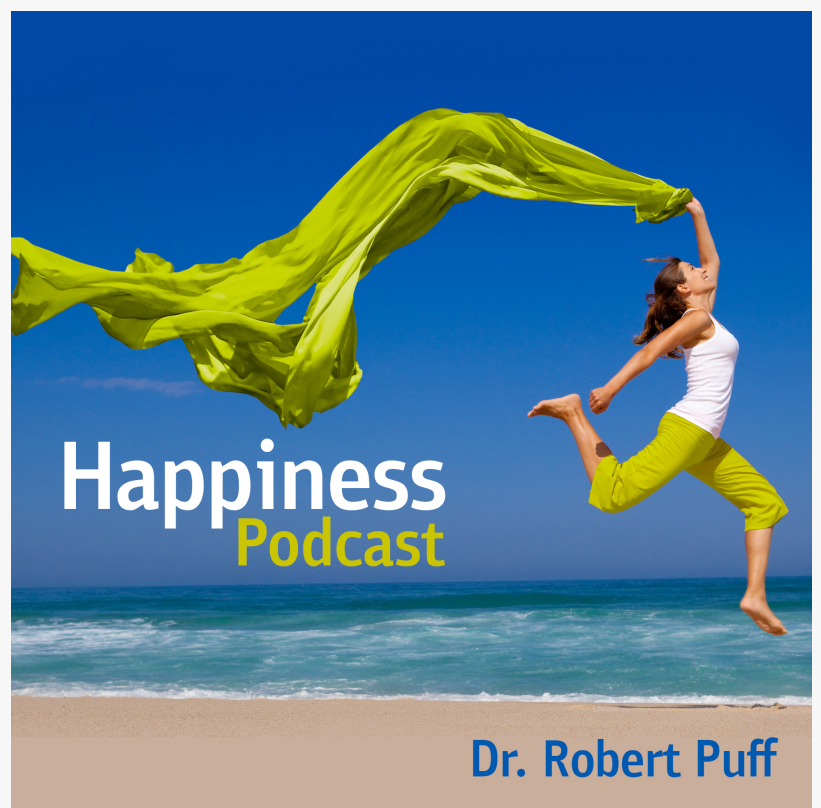
Love is a powerful force in the world because of its ability to reach so many people. Hate has the same ripple effects. I believe that the world would be a better place if we put a greater emphasis on learning to love and show kindness to others. But we are a diverse species with different

upbringings and backgrounds. We can't always control what others do, but we do have the power to make our own decisions and contribute our own ripples into the world. After we recognize this, the question becomes do we want to contribute anger and hate, or love and kindness. I choose the latter.

Spreading love and kindness not only has positive effects on other people but also on ourselves. I personally feel my best when I'm able to make others feel good, and I feel my worst when I've made someone upset. Some people may feel a sense of momentary relief when they throw a rock of hate into the world, but that feeling usually morphs into shame and anger towards oneself. The same logic applies when we throw kindness into the world. We'll feel warmth in our hearts and thankfulness towards ourselves.

I believe that kindness is a skill and is something we choose to put out into the world every day. The most difficult part of expressing love and kindness to others is when the other person doesn't deserve it. Even in those moments when anger feels overpowering, I still believe that kindness should prevail. And when that isn't possible, because there will be times when your anger is warranted, I urge you to walk away. Leaving the conversation can help stop those ripples of hate of going out into the world.

Many years ago I went on vacation on the east coast. The mother of a friend of mine also lives on the east coast and I knew through my friend that she was lonely. I decided to go visit her



Happiness Podcast



Dr. Robert Puff

while on vacation and keep her company for a few hours. I enjoyed spending time with her, but then I went back to my vacation and didn't think much of it. Years later, my friend told me that his mother had shared how important that visit was to her and that it had made a difference in her life. I'm not sharing this example to be braggadocious, but using this to illustrate that we don't always know the impact that our actions have on others. I had no idea that my visit would have that type of impact on my friend's mother, but I let my kindness guide my decisions that day, and as a result, love and connection rippled out into the world.

Letting love and kindness guide my decisions creates a great deal of [happiness](#) in my heart. When I do things for others, I don't need to know the effects of my actions necessarily because doing the action is enough for me. My heart feels full when I create happiness for others. On the opposite end of the spectrum, my heart doesn't feel fulfilled when I display anger and hate. Hate hurts our world, while kindness makes our world more beautiful.

I want to challenge you to choose a day or a week to be especially kind. This could mean complimenting strangers, being extra thankful to people who help you throughout your day, learning people's names, or asking how someone's day is going and really listening. We are presented with many opportunities throughout the day to make a positive impact. I urge you to lead with kindness and love, and to not look for a response from that kindness, but to simply share it. Kindness is like perfume. You get to enjoy it, but the people around you can enjoy it too. After a day or a week, you might even start to notice how your actions affect the people around you.

In my profession, there have been countless times I've heard that someone was considering taking their own life and they changed their mind because of someone else's kindness. We really don't know the impact that our actions have on other people. And now that we understand what we choose to do or say creates ripples through the pond of life, imagine the impact we could have if we choose kindness over hate.

Self-love is also extremely important when we give so much to others. We're only able to show love and kindness to others when we love ourselves. This may look like taking a bath after a long day at work or choosing to rest over the weekend vs. seeing people. When our energy is replenished, we're then able to pass that positivity off to others.

Our actions have a lot of power over other people, but also our self-perception. When we love ourselves, we are able to love others. And when love and kindness guide our decisions, we'll find that the world we participate in looks a bit brighter.

About the [Happiness Podcast](#):

Do you ever wonder what it takes to lead a peaceful, happy life? Are you curious about the specific steps involved in a self-actualized, limitless life? Are you struggling with anxiety or depression? Or are you just plain tired and want some help? We explore all these concerns and

more every week on the Happiness Podcast, which has been downloaded over 10 million times since its inception. Happiness does not happen by chance, but because we take specific actions in our lives to create it.

Dr. Robert Puff, Ph.D., author of 13 books, TV show host, Psychology Today blogger, and corporate trainer, has been studying the actions it takes to reach the highest levels of human achievement for decades, and he wants to share what he knows with you. Come and explore, along with millions of others from the Happiness Podcast, Dr. Puff books and Psychology Today blog, private clients and corporate workshop attendees, the specific steps to take so that you can soar in your life.

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