
Small Things with Great Love

“We can do no great things, only small things with great love.”

–Mother Theresa

Last month, a student at my daughter, Evietta’s, high school took her own life. The evening before she died, she blogged: “I couldn’t tell you how great it feels to be alive right now. Earlier today, I was feeling crazy suicidal, and I really thought today would be the day, but it goes to show how a few kind words from lots of different people can help.”

Sadly and tragically, she saw things differently the next day. A few kind words had the power to overcome her suicidal thoughts for at least one day. I grieve to wonder what could have changed for her the next day to have made her choose a different outcome.

In response, the school surveyed students about positive things the school is doing right and what else could be done to help kids who are struggling. I had an opportunity to help tabulate the surveys. Students appreciated the opportunity to talk openly about what happened, to hear teachers and staff express care for students and to have the support of their friends. Their ideas for additional ways to help included more awareness education and support groups. In light of the detached vibe teens sometimes radiate, it surprised me how many students also

suggested: ask us if we are OK, check-in regularly, compliment us, give us hugs, and remind us often you care. The teens overwhelmingly said these small things make a big difference.

It’s often impossible to know what’s going on in another person’s life and what they’re struggling with. It is possible, though, to make a difference in how they feel, at least for one moment. When a client recently shared Mother Theresa’s words that “there are no great things, only small things with great love”, she inspired me to consciously put “great love” behind small, everyday things. The challenge is: How can I do this task/ have this conversation/ interact with this person/ with “great love”? I don’t always succeed but those occasions motivate me to try harder next time. Overall, it’s been a joy-inspiring endeavor.

The great accomplishments of Mother Theresa’s life were a series of small deeds performed with great love, consistently, day after day. As I reflect on my days, it’s the small acts of love, whether given, received or observed, that move me, make me feel connected, and elevate life from mere existence to a joyful celebration of being alive.

“Every time you smile at someone, it is an action of love, a gift to that person, a beautiful thing.”

–Mother Theresa
