

All Efforts Matter

Many people are feeling alarmed by the changing political tide in the United States. There's been a shock of realization about how divided we are as a nation. The day after the election, I felt swept up in a wave of hopelessness and helplessness, but as I began to hear accounts of hateful comments and activity, I resolved to make an effort to be positive force. They may be small steps, but I've been signing petitions to make my opinions known, I marched in the Boston Women's March, I'm wearing a safety pin to show that people of any race, religion, or creed will be safe with me, and I'm taking steps wherever I can to be kind.

At the end of a group meditation one Wednesday night, I struck up a conversation with a woman who I'd never seen there before but had met on a church hike. The next morning, I received this email from her:

I want to say thank you for your making the effort to greet me last night. I so needed to connect, and your gesture was so lovely to me. So small, so thoughtful, so welcome.
thank you

I didn't have to make an effort to welcome her, but I wanted to. She certainly didn't have to acknowledge my outreach, but I was so touched that she did. It made my day. Small actions can and do make a difference.

This reminds me of the starfish story, based on a story in *Star Thrower*, by Loren Eiseley that is a favorite in coaching and personal development circles:

An old man had a habit of early morning walks on the beach. One day, after a storm, he saw a human figure in the distance moving like a dancer. As he came closer he saw that it was a young woman and she was not dancing but was reaching down to the sand, picking up a starfish and very gently throwing them into the ocean.

"Young lady," he asked, "Why are you throwing starfish into the ocean?"

"The sun is up, and the tide is going out, and if I do not throw them in they will die."

"But young lady, do you not realize that there are miles and miles of beach and starfish all along it? You cannot possibly make a difference."

The young woman listened politely, paused and then bent down, picked up another starfish and threw it into the sea, past the breaking waves, saying, "It made a difference for that one."

What's the difference you want to make?

What step—big or small—will you make today?