

Volume 8, Issue 3

# MOTIVATED

THE MAGAZINE THAT MOVES YOU!

## THE 5 SIDE EFFECTS OF KINDNESS

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One of the phrases used a lot recently on social media is, "If you see something, say something." It refers to each of us being responsible to speak out, and I might add, do something, when we see something out of the ordinary or outright wrong. No wrongs will be righted if we don't, and terrible things can happen if we turn a blind eye.

We all have God-given talents and abilities and have been entrusted with skills, resources, time, energy, minds, and awareness to invest in our families, communities, and the world at large.

There are many ways to do this, of course. Each of us bring our unique personalities and circumstances to the table. Some may feel called to care for orphans or the elderly, others may want to help feed the hungry or visit the solitaire, while yet others of us simply want to be an example of positivity and caring in the work place. Other ways to serve are taking care of animals and nature, and preserving our environment, or being a peacemaker in a culturally diverse world.

Whatever it is, when we all take responsibility for something that needs improving, we can be assured of positive results, and build for future generations.

The articles in this issue of *Motivated* give more ideas of how we can make a difference to the world and those around us. Of course, in addition to our responsibilities to our families and society, we also have a responsibility to ourselves. As author Eleanor Brownn puts it, "Rest and self-care are so important. When you take time to replenish your spirit, it allows you to serve others from the overflow. You cannot serve from an empty vessel." It's a good reminder to cover all our bases.

Christina Lane  
For *Motivated*



# The Common Denominator

By Keith Phillips, adapted

I wish you could meet three people who each made a big impression on me this past year. The first was a waiter's assistant who cleared my table from his wheelchair with such outgoing charm that I wasn't a bit surprised when the manager told me on my way out that he considered this young man to be his most valuable employee. "I think more people come back for him than for the food," the manager joked.

The second was a blind beggar whose smile and heartfelt greeting has me looking for him whenever I'm in the area.

The third was a middle-aged cashier whose "Have a nice day"—after who knows how many hours on her feet—was so genuine that she completely

turned my day around. Never mind that I know she said the same thing to every customer before and after me; I was the one drowning that day, and she was my lifesaver.

What is it about people like these three that leaves us envious—not of their circumstances but of their cheerful dispositions? Like angels in disguise, these unlikely champions of goodwill seem to say to us, "Join the team!"

In search of their secret, I looked for a common denominator—how they manage to not only rise above adversity, but to take so many others with them—and I think I found it. They not only rise above adversity, but in the process, encourage others that cross their paths. ■





# The 5 Side Effects of Kindness

By David R. Hamilton PhD, adapted

When we think of side effects the first thing that springs to mind are the side effects of drugs. But who'd have thought that kindness could have side effects too?

Well, it does! And positive ones at that.

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## 1. Kindness makes us happier

When we do something kind for someone else, we feel good. On a spiritual level, many people feel that this

is because it is the right thing to do and so we're tapping into something deep and profound inside of us that says, "This is who I am."

On a biochemical level, it is believed that the good feeling we get is due to elevated levels of the brain's natural versions of morphine and heroin, which we know as endogenous opioids. These cause elevated levels of dopamine in the brain and so we get a natural high, often referred to as "Helper's High".

## 2. Kindness gives us healthier hearts

Acts of kindness are often accompanied by emotional warmth. Emotional warmth produces the hormone oxytocin in the brain and throughout the body. Of recent interest is its significant role in the cardiovascular system.

Oxytocin causes the release of a chemical called nitric oxide in blood vessels, which dilates (expands) the blood vessels. This reduces blood pressure and therefore oxytocin is known as a “cardio-protective” hormone because it protects the heart (by lowering blood pressure). Therefore, acts of kindness can be cardio-protective and make for a healthier heart.

## 3. Kindness slows ageing

Ageing on a biochemical level is a combination of many things, but two culprits that speed the process are free radicals and inflammation, both of which result from making unhealthy lifestyle choices.

But remarkable research now shows that oxytocin (that we produce through emotional warmth) reduces levels of free radicals and inflammation in the cardiovascular system and so slows ageing at the source. Incidentally these two culprits also play a major role in heart disease, so this is also another reason why kindness is good for the heart.

There have also been suggestions in the scientific journals of the strong link between compassion and the activity of the vagus nerve. The vagus nerve, as well as regulating heart rate, also controls inflammation levels in the body. One study that used loving-kindness and compassion meditation found that

kindness and compassion did, in fact, reduce inflammation in the body, mostly likely due to its effects on the vagus nerve.

## 4. Kindness makes for better relationships

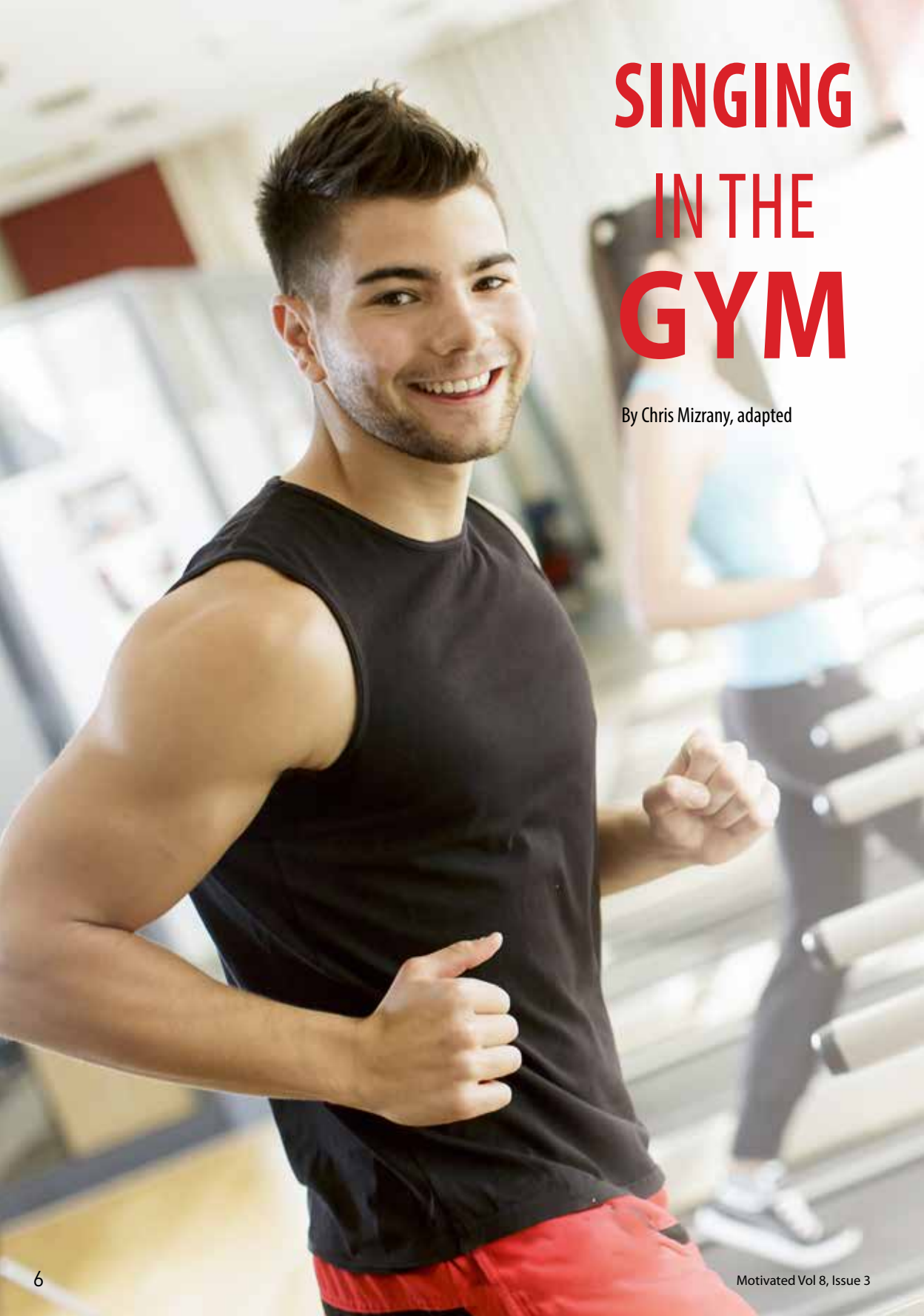
This is one of the most obvious points. We all know that we like people who show us kindness. This is because kindness reduces the emotional distance between two people and so we feel more bonded. So today, when we are kind to each other, we feel a connection, and new relationships are forged, or existing ones strengthened.

## 5. Kindness is contagious

When we're kind we inspire others to be kind, and studies show that it actually creates a ripple effect that spreads outwards to our friends' friends' friends—to 3-degrees of separation. Just as a pebble creates waves when it is dropped in a pond, so acts of kindness ripple outwards touching others' lives, and inspire kindness everywhere the wave goes.

A recent scientific study reported that an anonymous 28-year-old person walked into a clinic and donated a kidney. It set off a “pay it forward” type ripple effect where the spouses or other family members of recipients of a kidney donated one of theirs to someone else in need. The “domino effect,” as it was called in the *New England Journal of Medicine* report, spanned the length and breadth of the United States of America, where 10 people received a new kidney as a consequence of that anonymous donor. ■



A young man with short brown hair and a light beard is smiling at the camera. He is wearing a black sleeveless shirt and red shorts. He is in a gym, with a woman running on a treadmill in the background. The title 'SINGING IN THE GYM' is written in large red letters in the top right corner.

# SINGING IN THE GYM

By Chris Mizrany, adapted

**T**his morning I dragged myself out of bed. The sun isn't even fully up, so why should I be?

As I mulled over that pithy logic, I dressed, grabbed my bag, and trudged out the front door.

Now I hope some of you will empathize with my feelings when you hear my purpose. I was on my way to the gym.

*But hold on!* you might say. *Gyming is such a wonderful, refreshing, exciting, thrilling, special time!* Well, I wasn't feeling quite that way. It had been quite a week, and getting up that bit earlier was eroding my "happy ration" for the day.

Anyway, I got through my workout, and made it to the showers with just enough time before heading home. I was mentally distant, thinking of the day ahead, when I heard someone singing.

I don't know about other gyms, but generally, no one sings at my gym. If they do, it's usually between a hum and a breathless squeak. This was real singing, confident and clear. Someone was singing a song that I didn't recognize.

I was, well, shocked. In a couple of minutes, this guy had both inspired me and put me to shame. He was sharing positive energy in a simple, powerful way.

When he finished singing, he smiled and said, "I hope you have a great day!" Then he picked up his bag and walked out. You'd better believe my day turned upside down and inside out in a great way. I

told my fiancée about it when I got home. I told my friends. I told my family. I told just about as many people as I could, and now I'm telling you.

What I took away from this experience is the following:

**There is always someone near you that you can influence in a positive way.** There in the gym, this guy changed my outlook. He had no idea what I was going through, and he didn't have to know. Likewise, we're each continually meeting, interacting with, and influencing many people. If we can exhibit joy in a weary world and kindness in a "social"—yet socially inept—society, we can change lives too.

**Never judge by outward appearance.** I think I've probably missed out on something great many times in my life because I was too quick to judge. I've read that most people size up and mentally judge a stranger within 30 seconds or less of meeting them. One thing I learned from that is to always strive to be a good example, because we may not have a second chance.

**Think of the big picture.** One song, one kind word, one smile, one good deed, one note, one email, one tip, one pat on the back, one hug, one [fill in the blank] can have a constructive impact far beyond the effort it takes to do it.

Let's be willing to invest more in the long-term results—even, and especially, when we cannot see them yet—at every chance we get ... even early in the morning. ■

# A JOYFUL WORK ENVIRONMENT



By Jessie Richards

**O**n a recent day off, I spent the better part of the day at the zoo. It's been a long time since I've gone to a zoo. Animals are fascinating and a lot of fun to observe, and I learned some interesting information. What I noticed, too, which I don't recall feeling as much when I was younger, was sadness because of the animals' lack of freedom. I'm confident they are being well cared for at this particular zoo; but can any cage, however spacious, ever measure up to the wide-open spaces of their native habitats?

I've been thinking a lot lately about the factors that make a workplace either healthy and joyful, or toxic and miserable. I won't go as far as to make comparisons between people in their cubicles and

monkeys in their cages—though I do think that's the way some people feel.

Over the last couple of years I've read several books about organizational environments, and found a few in particular enlightening and inspiring. They all touch on similar key concepts from different angles. One of these is that having freedom or autonomy in one's work is one of the most significant factors in motivation and job satisfaction. Conversely, lack of freedom to make decisions that affect one's work is one of the most, if not the most, demoralizing factors in today's workplace.

*Reinventing Organizations*<sup>1</sup> looks at a number of organizations that in recent years implemented modes of operation



that challenge the industrial-era paradigms that many corporate operations are based on. These “futuristic” organizations are centered around self-management and wholeness—that is to say, bringing more autonomy and freedom into the workplace, and helping people to live a richer work life and thus a richer life overall.

I don’t buy into the idea that everyone can and should find “work that doesn’t even feel like work because we love it so much.” That’s a nice ideal, and if it works out for some people, I’m happy for them. But I’m a realist, and I know that we’re not all going to get that. On the other hand, most of us spend eight or more hours a day at work; so I believe that even if we don’t “love it,” there should be some joy in it, some sense of purpose, of community, of achievement and fulfillment.

One of the concepts that comes up repeatedly in the things I’ve read is that to change an organization from an “industrial machine” type of structure into a “people-based” structure takes buy-in from top leadership. I’ve been thinking a lot, though, about what someone like me—a middle manager, not a CEO or higher-up—can do to make his or her workplace a more enjoyable and positive and productive environment, with more of a sense of community.

*Joy at Work*<sup>2</sup> describes a company founded on four values—Integrity, Fairness, Social Responsibility, and Fun, defined as “rewarding, exciting, creative, and successful.” The author says that “joy at work starts with individual initiative and individual control.” While I may not have full control, I can still

have initiative. I can do things that work toward creating a healthier and happier work environment. And one thing I always have control over is how I act—specifically, how I treat people and how I attempt to motivate my team.

I have tried to take a closer look at my own assumptions about work in general, human nature, my role and personal motivation, and specific individuals. For example, do I base my interactions at work on the idea that “my coworkers put their own interest ahead of what is best for the organization and are selfish” or on the idea that “my coworkers want to use their talents and skills to make a positive contribution to the organization and the world?”

I know what motivates me. I know that it’s “autonomy, mastery, and purpose,”<sup>3</sup> or to expound in my own words: having enough independence to make decisions about work that affects me, being able to learn new skills and get better at the ones I have, and doing something that I feel is worthwhile. For the most part, these same things motivate those I work with. I try to believe that deep down most people—especially those who, like me, work at a nonprofit with socially conscious goals—mean well, care about our organization and greater community, and are trying to do a good job. And if even just one person at the office—me—is happier and less stressed out because I’m looking at others charitably, giving them the benefit of the doubt, and trying to do my part to make things work well for all of us ... well, that’s a start. ■

1. Frederic Laloux, Nelson Parker: Brussels, 2014

2. Dennis Bakke, PVG: Seattle, 2005

3. Daniel Pink, Drive: *The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us*, Riverhead Books: New York, 2010

# GETTING AN EARLY START

PARENTING  
FROM THE HEART



By Rosane Pereira, adapted

I recently took my teenage son to an ecotourism project in the big *Complexo do Alemão* group of favelas [slums] in northern Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. There are cable gondolas that stop on all five mountaintops from where we could see the entire bay and all the beautiful mountain ranges. Dotted the mountains, there are also thousands of small huts lacking decent roofs, and with bare and unpainted brick walls. Those were the favelas.

At one point, my son commented, “It’s amazing how many more poor people there are than rich!”

On our way back down, we talked with a volunteer who had begun working there before peace had been achieved, at the time when the police and drug cartels had been engaged in daily gun battles. Another woman described how she used to have to walk to the fountain to get water every day when she was younger, until her father and others had been able to dig a community well. Life in the area has improved significantly in the past few years, but the stories these women shared were a reminder of the dire conditions so many people live in. This excursion had quite an impact on my son, who is now showing more interest in helping

destitute families in our city rather than being primarily concerned with having his own wants met.

I believe that teaching children from an early age to share and consider others is vital, so that this becomes part of their personality. I recently read that the children who survived WW2 learned solidarity through the dreadful circumstances they had to endure. Years of sharing every scrap of bread or meat helped to mold their characters for the rest of their lives, and became part of their way of being.

For many years, I have taught children in poor communities, and the conditions have not always been ideal. Sometimes we had to rotate the educational materials or toys that were available, so it was imperative that the children learned to take turns, and while waiting their turn, cooperate in small chores, like putting away their things or clearing the table after a snack.

Children can develop compassion for others through participating in services for the community, scout groups, or helping the less fortunate, and if they have been taught these values from an early age, they will be more likely to hold on to them for the rest of their lives. ■

# THE JOURNEY TO SIMPLICITY



By Amanda White, adapted

The other day I was listening to a radio program on the way to the gym. Each day they ask a question for their listeners to respond to, either via phone or their Facebook page, and the topic that day was: “What do you look forward to?”

The answers that listeners were sending in were simple, yet refreshing. For example, one woman said she looked forward to having a cup of tea at night once her children were in bed.

It got me thinking about the simple things in life. Essentially, that’s what we all generally look forward to—the little things. A hug after a long day. A cup of something hot in the morning. The sun shining again after a rainy patch, enabling us to finally hang our laundry. A comfortable bed to slide into at night. A refreshing shower. A freshly mowed lawn. A meal out.

As Robert Louis Stevenson put it, “The best things in life are nearest: breath in your nostrils, light in your eyes, flowers at your feet, duties at your hand, the path of right just before you. Then do not grasp at the stars, but do life’s plain, common work as it comes, certain that daily duties and daily bread are the sweetest things in life.”

Sure, sometimes we look forward to big and exciting things, like an upcoming vacation. But more often than not, it’s the simple, day-to-day things that bring us joy and put a smile on our face. I’m reminding myself that I need to think more about those things, appreciate them more, as they get so easily lost amidst the craziness of life. It’s not a new realization by any means. It’s just one of those principles of life and happiness that easily fade out of focus when so many bigger and more stressful responsibilities are obstructing my view or weighing me down.

I decided to start small. I took that woman’s advice on the radio. I set aside a few minutes to relax with a cup of tea that night after the kids were in bed, and I enjoyed every sip! ■



# Better together

NOTABLE  
QUOTES



There are two different kinds of people in the world. There are people who instinctively look for every chance to be a victim, and those who look for every chance to rise above—regardless of where they are in life and what’s happening around them. ... We are all powerful individuals. Let’s use that power to create something beautiful!  
—Christopher Hawke

No one can whistle a symphony. It takes an orchestra to play it.—Halford Luccock

If I could solve all the problems myself, I would.—Thomas Edison, when asked why he had a team of twenty-one assistants

Walking with a friend in the dark is better than walking alone in the light.  
—Helen Keller

Friendship: To be a strong hand in the dark to another in the time of need.  
—Hugh Black

Coming together is a beginning.  
Keeping together is progress.  
Working together is success.  
—Henry Ford

No member of a crew is praised for the rugged individuality of his rowing.  
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

No love, no friendship can cross the path of our destiny without leaving some mark on it forever.—François Mauriac

Do all the good you can.  
By all the means you can.  
In all the ways you can.  
In all the places you can.  
At all the times you can.  
To all the people you can.  
As long as ever you can.  
— Attributed to John Wesley

