

Commentary: Healing the world with kindness

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Hanna Boys Center student Isaac Carapia wrote this essay in honor of World Kindness Day on Nov. 13. |



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Today I want to talk about how kindness has changed a life and how this example could inspire others to change a nation. I want to share with you a story about a young boy with difficulties doing basic everyday tasks. This young boy was struggling and expressed all of his emotions through his actions not his words. He never told anyone why he got so frustrated since he had difficulties talking about it, so he just got pushed aside and shrugged off as a troubled kid. He was put into years and years of counseling and professionals said

he was mentally prepared to go to middle school or at least that's what they told him. Hopefully, he wouldn't worry his mom again. So he arrived at school ready to start his show of being a class clown to hide his emotions like he always did, but middle schools don't tolerate as many behaviors as elementary schools, and he got kicked out.

Through this, was this kid ever shown kindness, or treated like anything other than a naive kid? Instead of approaching his differences with curiosity or concern, the public school gave him years of referrals to the office. The kid was already marked as "bad." When you label someone, you take away the chance to hear a different perspective or really get to know that person.

As the years went on, everyone slowly started to give up on him. The system just kept passing him along. Truly defeated and ready to give up, the kid wasn't on a path to anything anymore; he was just sitting on the side of the road to his own life, no longer progressing forward, no longer making and learning from mistakes. This was a depressing and powerless time, a time when it would make sense to just end the game if it were not for one person showing kindness to him. That one person was his mom. She always saw the "diamond that shines within him" and that gave him the courage to go on. It only takes one person giving kindness to another to prevent a supervillain.

Supervillains in comics are usually the ugly duckling or the last ones picked on a team. Whenever we learn the origins of these villains, we hear about how they were not evil at first. They were all ignored, given up on, or left alone. When people don't feel comfortable to interact with them, they are left without any purpose or connection. The biggest thing in common with

these supervillains is that they were never shown the kindness that would have given them hope for a better life.

Back to the story: the kid was running out of places to turn to, but his mom wanted to find a perfect fit that would help nurture and create his academic achievement. She was stuck for a while until she found one that spoke to her, a small boarding school called Hanna Boys Center. It was advertised as a place where kids were not being looked at as bad, but kids were looked at as misunderstood. This misunderstood kid was me, and this is the turning point when I started to view myself in a better light.

When I arrived at Hanna, I was ready to go through the same repetitive motions I've been going through the past couple of years of my life. But at this school, they practiced patience and kindness instead of giving up on kids and rejecting them. You mess up and walk into a room rudely, and you're forgiven right there on the spot and asked to come in again, the right way obviously. I think this forgiveness should be the way most people should interact instead of holding grudges. Hanna helps you figure out what's going on in your own brain so you can better help yourself. Instead of asking you what's wrong with you, they'll ask what's

happening to you, most staff are trained to use soft skills and notice when a kid is somewhat down instead of waiting until they lash out. I've been here four years, on a campus that's filled to the brim with kindness, and I wouldn't want it any other way. This campus diagnosed me and helped change everything about me for the better.

How is it that through years of counseling nothing about me changed but when a school filled with kindness came into my life they helped me change dramatically? It comes down to four basic principles in my mind on how practicing kindness affects everyone around you.

The first one is simple but it's the first one everyone should be working on. The first step is loving yourself. I think the next step is learning how to actually care for the well-being of others. Stopping to get to know a person and learn how they are doing helps people feel appreciated.

Third, I think it's super important to be empathetic. Stop and think about the tough times you've been through over the years, no one has been at their best at all times. Putting yourself in this position, how would you want to be treated?

The last step may be the most important one to me since it's the one that kept me on the right road, and that's to never give up on anybody. You lose that valuable connection with someone when you give up, and you might have been their only hope.

The kindness I experienced at Hanna Boys Center turned my life around and can help a community thrive. If modeling these principles helped a group of lost and misunderstood "potential supervillains" like me learn to love ourselves, care for others, be empathetic, and never give up, imagine what kindness could do on a larger scale. Kindness can go on to help endless communities heal and grow. We are united when we are open-minded, forgive, embrace differences, never give up, listen to different perspectives, try to understand one another, and look for the best in people. It is time for us to embrace kindness to reunite a country.

I'm glad I didn't become a supervillain.

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