

FOREWORD BY DEEPAK CHOPRA

# RADICAL KINDNESS

*The Life-Changing Power  
of Giving and Receiving*

**ANGELA C. SANTOMERO**



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I



WHAT IS  
RADICAL  
KINDNESS?

# 1



## HEART-SEEING

### The First Step Toward Radical Kindness

Mister Rogers once said, “There are three ways to ultimate success: The first way is to be kind. The second way is to be kind. The third way is to be kind.” I’d like to think that we all know what it means to be kind to one another. It’s saying thank you, holding the door open for someone, feeding a stray cat, or comforting a loved one after a bad day at home, work, or school. It’s what happens every time you’re told to “be nice,” and one of the first concepts introduced to children in preschool and kindergarten. Even the most downtrodden members of society know about

kindness, if only because they are painfully aware of the lack of it in their own lives.

But what do we mean by *radical* kindness? Radical kindness means rooting all you say and do in kindness, being unconditionally kind all the time, to everyone. It means going beyond situational niceness or merely “doing the right thing” and, instead, living from a place of compassion.

## What Is Heart-Seeing?

As Antoine de Saint-Exupéry writes in *The Little Prince*, “It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.”\* When you are a radically kind person, you “see” with your heart. Seeing with our hearts offers us an opportunity to make what is often invisible visible. When we “heart-see,” we see through a lens of trust, respect, love, patience, and warmth. Heart-seeing connects us to something that is

\* Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*, trans. Katherine Woods (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1943).

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so beautiful, so transformative, that the world before us changes in delightful, unexpected, even revolutionary ways.

As Dr. Wayne Dyer said in his *Power of Intention* PBS special, “When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.”\* When that inner change happens, when we embrace and understand the importance of kindness, we can transform our inner lives and the outer world. We feel better; we’re less anxious and more creative; we have more energy; and when we look at people, we see them in a more accepting way.

When you heart-see, you interpret what you think you are observing with a keen awareness that you cannot possibly know the whole story of someone else’s life. That rude waiter? Well, you don’t know what kind of day he’s been having—maybe someone was unkind to him; maybe dozens of people were, and he just wants to go home. That baby screaming on the plane? Sure, she’s annoying, but maybe that

\* Dr. Wayne Dyer, *The Power of Intention* (Carlsbad, CA: Hay House, 2004), 249; available for viewing at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=urQPraeY0w>.

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child hasn't slept all day and has a headache. Unlike you and me, the baby can't tell her parents what's bothering her.

Practicing radical kindness means assuming the best of everyone—heart-seeing them—and then acting toward them with compassion, patience, and humility. It means infusing what we think, say, and do throughout the day with warmth, understanding, and care. It means treating everyone—including ourselves!—as important, as if they matter in the world. And yes, that means *everyone*, whether that person is a family member, friend, stranger, panhandler, someone with opposing political views, or the loudmouth on his cell phone in a hushed coffee shop. To see all human beings *first* with unconditional compassion is to heart-see them, and it is the only way to integrate a practice of radical kindness into our lives.

Yes, living a life of radical kindness challenges that old idea that nice guys finish last or that compassion is somehow a form of weakness. Research has demonstrated time and again that you can be kind *and* strong, compassionate *and* determined, gentle *and*

## HEART-SEEING

opinionated. Seeing with the heart takes guts, and acting with compassion takes self-confidence and perspective. The qualities you need in order to be kind (compassion, integrity, respect) are exactly the same qualities you need to be brave, strong, and successful.

To practice radical kindness by heart-seeing is to practice the art of noticing. Becoming more aware of others, becoming more sensitive, necessitates that we first notice our own circumstances, needs, and qualities. (We'll come back to this idea and discuss it further in chapters to come.) Then, as we move beyond our own personal needs to see the concerns, heart-breaks, and struggles of others, we widen our vision of the world. Too often we get so caught up in our day-to-day struggles that we don't realize that the person standing next to us on line at the grocery store is having a bad day or is worried about a sick parent, or the kid behind the counter at the fast-food restaurant is in need of a few words of gratitude.

