



A BRIEFING ON

HANDFULS OF SMALL KINDNESSES

A suggestion for clusters such as UK school & college Years and other small groups – eg families, friends, colleagues - or thoughtful individuals...
...to help appreciate the consideration that people show for others

HANDFULS and Poetrees are a little Just1 development of a US-born idea that may bring a big smile for UK students, teachers of PSHE/RE/Humanities, chaplains, families, friends. It's groups compiling and sharing examples of what they see as people's small kindnesses – lessons in generosity of spirit. And friends, families, social groups or individuals might emulate them.



The origin? In September 2019 **The New York Times Magazine** ran an example - by one person as poet - which has had worldwide appeal. *"Sometimes a poem just strikes a precise moment. Small Kindnesses, by Danusha Laméris, feels utterly necessary for our time — a poem celebrating minor, automatic graciousness within a community, which can shine a penetrating light. It's a catalog of small encouragements, unfolding as might a child's palm filled with shiny stones..."*

In early April 2022, as part of celebrating National Poetry Month, the Magazine invited teenagers to read the poem (overleaf), then asked: *What small kindnesses do you appreciate?* Over 1,300 young people around the world responded in the spirit of the original piece.

Danusha reworked a selection as a collaborative poem: *"All of them point toward something so important: The smallest things we do just might matter a great deal. I am moved by the realization that simply speaking a name, giving a wave, or offering a space in traffic could change someone's whole day. Or more. I am grateful to these young poets for opening spaces of possibility for all of us. Thank you for showing us ways we might lighten the load for someone else, and for showing us how to notice the goodness already all around us every day".* Danusha is at www.danushalameris.com – and the article with the big collaborative poem is at www.nytimes.com/2022/04/28/learning/small-kindnesses-poem.html.

NB Facebook has some good readings that may be useful to show or emulate.



How to join in? Gather and share Handfuls of Small Kindnesses - along these lines, but you do whatever suits

- Small groups make sense – to get perhaps 20-30 or so entries
- Invite them to read the poem - and ask them to watch out for and note similar kindnesses offered to themselves or someone else.
- In time – maybe a couple of weeks – collect up their learned experiences.
- Compile the responses into a document – maybe PDF to browse on-line, display, or read out.
- Share your Handful inside and out so others can enjoy – and learn from - the examples.
- Maybe make them into Poetrees – see overleaf

POE↑TREES

And afterwards? You might tell Danusha what you've done (better still, kindly buy her books!) And if you send your Handfuls to hughgibbons@just1.org.uk, they might form a Libraryful.

This suggestion comes from Hugh Gibbons Conductor of Just1
with links to this briefing et al at
www.just1.org.uk/handfulsofkindness

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HANDFULS OF SMALL KINDNESSES
FOR UK SCHOOLS & COLLEGES et al

SMALL KINDNESSES by Danusha Lameris

I've been thinking about the way, when you walk
down a crowded aisle, people pull in their legs
to let you by. Or how strangers still say "bless you"
when someone sneezes, a leftover
from the Bubonic plague. "Don't die," we are saying.
And sometimes, when you spill lemons
from your grocery bag, someone else will help you
pick them up. Mostly, we don't want to harm each other.
We want to be handed our cup of coffee hot,
and to say thank you to the person handing it. To smile
at them and for them to smile back. For the waitress
to call us honey when she sets down the bowl of clam chowder,
and for the driver in the red pick-up truck to let us pass.
We have so little of each other, now. So far
from tribe and fire. Only these brief moments of exchange.
What if they are the true dwelling of the holy, these
fleeting temples we make together when we say, "Here,
have my seat," "Go ahead — you first," "I like your hat."



Assuming that you've made your own Handful of Small Kindnesses into a Doc or PDF format, there are lots of ways of airing and sharing. NB Make it a reasonable size of text to read – 12pt upwards. Put the first few words in bold, to make each example stand out a little.



For public display, Poetrees help to study or discuss together, here's simple suggestion. Print out. Slice each example into a strip – which becomes the branch of a tree. Then find something to be the trunk.

Examples are here on noticeboard, repurposed tennis racquet, cardboard box.



www.just1.org.uk/handfulsofkindness

Contact hughgibbons@just1.org.uk

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