



As Christmas, New Years Eve, the end of one year, and the beginning of another all coincided within a week recently, I had a chance to think about generosity. The concept of etiquette is that we behave politely and respectfully to others, and the rules of etiquette are the structure in which that can occur.

But generosity of spirit is altogether different; it is something of which we are all capable and the only cost is time and thought. It is often the best and kindest gift anyone can give or receive. The first thing that is required is that you pay attention. We hear and read so much about being "present" and "living in the moment" and that is truly where we actually are and should be. I don't know about the rest of you, but I am capable of worrying about things that could never actually happen, and not able to see things coming at me with lightning speed. I read somewhere that if it isn't happening now, it isn't happening; I try to remember that as a mantra. But the generosity comes into play when something good or bad happens and people are there with you to help you interpret, or just experience, it. Asking "How are you?" and really listening to the answer is a good place to begin. A precious friend of mine has a dear friend who has a serious illness and she sends cards and little gifts on a regular basis because her friend is far away and this is the way she can "be there" for her. My beloved dog died recently and people came from long distances to bury him so I didn't have to.

A friend brings chicken soup when you are sick, or bakes Christmas cookies and brings you a plateful because he knows you can't cook a cookie worth beans. Another writes a story for you, or paints a painting, or sings a song, or brings you a pile of firewood and makes a fire. It sounds like that advertisement that creates a scenario and then says: "Priceless!" And priceless it is. There is a natural tendency to get wrapped up in ourselves, our issues, our problems; but think

More Than Manners

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of your neighbor down the street who is old and alone, or someone who doesn't have any family left with whom to celebrate; what would some minutes of your undivided attention be worth to her/him? Or that person who is recently separated whose friends are busy choosing sides? I can't think of anyone who wouldn't benefit from a hug, some coffee talk, or any acknowledgement of how special they are. For whatever reason at holiday time, families can bring out the best and the worst in us; expectations are often higher than reality, and a little kindness goes a very long way.

Best wishes for all things wonderful in the New Year, and remember to mind your manners!

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