



Whatever Happened to Smiling?

I'LL KEEP OFFERING THEM EVEN IF NO ONE ELSE IS

Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, "You cannot do kindness too soon, for you never know how soon it will be too late." It's the truth. You never know what someone's going through when you talk to them, so I'm always ready to offer kindness, whether it's popular or not. During 2020, masks made seeing each other's smiles difficult. It makes sense that smiles stopped being offered. Sometimes, if you smile at someone on the street, their confusion is clear as day. I think it made everyone grumpier not to be able to read emotions from under the mask. This year, Random Acts of Kindness Day falls on Feb. 17, a perfect chance to dedicate yourself to acting with kindness. Here's how I'm committed to spreading kindness for that day and the rest of the year.

As I engage with people, clients, friends, and family, I practice active listening during our conversations. I don't just listen to form a response but also take in the information they share. I note their likes or dislikes, which later helps me build our connection. In fact, a few months ago, this trait helped me give them the perfect gifts for the holidays. I'm a huge reader, so as I listen to others during our conversations, my mind commonly goes to thinking about a book that they might like to read. This was the seed that developed into the quarterly book giveaway that lands in your inbox in February, May, August, and November.

Though you may not think so, even small gifts can make a big difference. Spring break is coming up, the perfect opportunity to send postcards. They're often inexpensive but highly unique to each location you're traveling to. A postcard is usually 50 cents, and while the stamp will be a bit overpriced, since that's the real sale, it's a priceless way to brighten someone's day. As you travel, you can pop into a local gift shop and pick up a couple. Just writing a quick "Thinking of you" or "Sitting by the pool! Hope you're well" and shipping it off will take 10 minutes max. Folks barely get physical mail these days, much less have seen a postcard recently. Whoever receives them is often incredibly happy to see they've been thought of. It's the thought that counts, and this gift gives a nice vintage twist to anyone's day.



Fostering connections in these small but essential ways can encourage kindness to spread. This Random Acts of Kindness Day, think of how you can spread the joy you feel when others treat you kindly. It's up to you whether that's opening the door for someone, spreading a smile, buying a postcard, or giving a book away (depending on how soon the USPS delivers your copy of this newsletter, the February book giveaway may be merely days away). I encourage you to partake in this tradition, embody the golden rule, and treat others how you would like to be treated all year round.

- Andrew M. Ayers

CRAZY LAWSUITS SHOWCASE STRANGE REALITIES

Just because the law enforces order doesn't mean all the cases that get tried aren't a little silly. Let's delve into the realm of legal oddities with three particularly strange lawsuits, each bizarre enough to make you wonder if reality is stranger than fiction.

Subway's Knife Sandwich Fiasco

In a twist that sounds like a fast-food horror story, a man discovered a 7-inch serrated plastic knife baked into his Subway sandwich. This alarming find led him to file a whopping \$1 million lawsuit against Subway. Beyond the shock of the knife, he claimed the sandwich caused him severe stomach aches due to food poisoning. The case was eventually settled, but it remains a reminder of the potential dangers lurking in everyday meals.



Weatherman's Forecast Flub

Weather forecasts are often taken with a grain of salt, but not in the case of an Israeli woman who sued a weatherman for getting the forecast wrong. The weatherman predicted sunshine, but it rained, leading the woman to dress inappropriately and catch the flu. She sued for \$1,000, citing missed work and medication expenses. Surprisingly, she won the lawsuit against the TV station, setting a precedent that weather predictions might be more legally binding than previously thought.

The Victoria's Secret Mishap

A routine shopping trip to a Victoria's Secret store turned perilous for a customer when a metal piece from a pair of panties she was trying on flew off, striking her in the eye. This incident resulted in a cut cornea, which required a topical steroid treatment. Her lawsuit against the lingerie giant highlighted the potential hazards that can arise from seemingly innocuous products. The case raised questions about product safety and the responsibilities of retailers to ensure their products are free from such defects.

These lawsuits showcase the unexpected and often bizarre nature of legal disputes. They remind us that in the world of law, almost anything can become a case, no matter how outlandish it may seem.

Smile and Don't Run Out of Gas

WEIRD LAWS AROUND THE GLOBE

Let's embark on a journey around the globe to uncover some of the most unique laws on the books, from Arizona to Egypt. Protecting plants and birds, enforcing public cheerfulness, and preserving cultural dance traditions are among some of the examples of unique legislation we've uncovered.

Arizona's Cactus Custodians

In Arizona, the local cactuses are not just plants; they're legally protected entities. It behooves everyone to avoid harming these prickly residents, as you could face up to 25 years in prison. This law serves as a stern reminder to treat nature with respect. The bottom line to stay out of jail? Don't cut the cactus. Period.

Australia's Homing Pigeon Heroes

Down under, harming a homing pigeon isn't just frowned upon; it's illegal. These birds, known for their remarkable navigation skills, are protected by a law that imposes a fine of \$250 for causing them harm. It's a testament to Australia's reverence for its avian inhabitants.

Germany's Run-Out-of-Gas Ban

The idea of a highway where drivers can go as fast as they want is a reality on Germany's Autobahn. But it comes with a peculiar (yet understandable) rule: No matter what you do, *don't run out of gas!* Not only would it be a safety issue, but you'll also face a hefty fine. So, fill up before heading out.

Milan's Smile Mandate

In Milan, Italy, they take fashion seriously. Smiles are at the top of their list, too. An old, never-repealed city regulation from Austro-Hungarian times mandates that everyone must smile at all times, barring those attending funerals or spending time in a hospital. This unique law, originating from an idea by Luigi Fabio, is aimed at ensuring a cheerful public demeanor. So, when in Milan, keep smiling — it's not just good manners, it's the law!

Egypt's Belly Dancing Decree

In Egypt, the art of belly dancing is a cultural treasure and is also subject to gender-specific legislation. Here, men are prohibited from



performing this traditional dance. This law highlights the unique cultural and historical significance of belly dancing in Egypt and the gender roles traditionally associated with this mesmerizing art form.

These laws are a testament to the diverse nature of legal systems across the world. They remind us that the rule of law can sometimes be as varied as the cultures they represent.

TAKE A *BREAK*



PUFF PASTRY BERRY HEARTS

Inspired by Weelicious.com

Ingredients

- 1 package frozen puff pastry, defrosted
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 tsp powdered sugar
- 1/2 cup fresh raspberries (or berries of your choice)

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400 F. Unfold the puff pastry and use a heart-shaped cookie cutter to cut into heart shapes.
2. On a baking sheet, place puff pastry hearts and bake for 10–12 minutes or until golden brown.
3. In a standing mixer, whip the cream on medium-high speed for 2–3 minutes. Add the powdered sugar and beat on high for 30 more seconds or until thick and fluffy.
4. Remove hearts from the oven and allow to cool completely. Slice each heart in half between pastry layers to create 2 hearts. Top the bottom half with whipped cream and berries, and place the other half on top to form a sandwich.

Teach Kids to Navigate Conflict

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO PEACE

When you hear the word “conflict” in the context of kids, you might think of schoolyard bullies or having to ground your kid. However, children have their own disputes, ranging from toddler tussles over toys to digital duels between pre-teens. While they are undeniably challenging, conflicts provide kids the chance to learn life lessons. They encourage young minds to put on their detective hats, explore new perspectives, reevaluate old ideas, and even cement the bonds of friendship. Use the following strategies to equip your child with the superpower of conflict resolution.

Empower Peacemakers

Conflict resolution skills are the compass that guides kids through the maze of life's disputes. Here's a map to help your child navigate these tricky waters:



- **Pause and Reflect:** Teach your child the art of taking a deep breath and calming the storm within. Reacting in a frenzy of anger is like tossing gasoline on a fire.
- **Speak Your Truth:** Encourage your child to explain their side of the story in clear and simple words. Understanding each other's viewpoints is key to conflict resolution.
- **Get Creative:** Foster their inner Picasso of problem-solving. Encourage them to brainstorm solutions that cater to everyone's wishes, like a culinary mastermind crafting the perfect dish.
- **Choose Respect:** Teach your child the importance of treating others kindly, even when disagreements threaten to capsize the boat.

These steps help kids patch up the current squabbles and cultivate emotional intelligence — a shield against future conflicts and a bridge to tolerance.

Foster 'fun' conflict-resolution experiences in the home.

Parents wield the magic wand in conflict resolution play. Organize family activities that mimic real-life conflict scenarios, like board games with rules that spark disagreements. These friendly bouts teach your child the art of keeping their cool under pressure. And don't forget about the power of make-believe! Encourage your child to stage a conflict resolution drama. It's not just fun; it's a crash course in diplomacy.

Remember, every successful conflict your child conquers will give them confidence. By imparting these skills early on, you gift them tools for a lifetime of harmonious interactions, both personally and professionally. So, let's embark on this valuable conflict resolution journey together — the world will be a better place.



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HISTORY OF PREGNANCY TESTING

FROM SEEDS TO SCIENCE

From ancient times, human ingenuity has been pivotal in unraveling medical mysteries, and pregnancy testing is a particularly fascinating example.

In Egypt, around 1350 BCE, pregnancy testing blended mysticism and early science. Women would urinate on wheat



and barley seeds, an intriguing method that modern research has shown to be surprisingly accurate, with a 70% success rate. If barley grew, it indicated a male child; wheat signified a female.

Across different cultures, unique approaches emerged. The Greeks, influenced by Hippocrates, developed diagnostic theories based on the four bodily humors. In India, ancient Ayurvedic texts detailed pulse examination techniques for various conditions, including pregnancy, showcasing remarkable observational abilities and a deep understanding of the human body.

The Middle Ages saw a curious amalgamation of superstition and the beginnings of scientific inquiry. "Piss prophets" examined urine for its color and clarity, practices that were precursors to today's urinalysis.



A significant advancement came in the 20th century with the discovery of the hormone hCG. This breakthrough led to the first reliable home pregnancy tests in the 1960s, marking a dramatic shift from rudimentary ancient methods and offering greater accuracy and privacy.

This journey from ancient seed tests to sophisticated modern diagnostics illustrates the evolution in our understanding of the human body. Those early tests laid the groundwork for the reliable techniques we use today, inspiring us to continue improving our medical knowledge and practices.