

ROSS HEAVEN

SPIRIT
IN THE
CITY

THE SEARCH
FOR THE SACRED IN
EVERYDAY LIFE

*'Ross has done for shamanism what
Colin Wilson did for psychic studies'*

NICK WOOD
The Sacred Hoop

and help me. I agreed and we dug out each others' cars [then] we all put our heads together and figured out who was too old or too ill to dig themselves out and went about, as a team, digging out people most of us had never met. As the day went on, more and more people joined us . . . We became an army of snow diggers, our only motivation being concern for the people who were stuck and our growing friendship. I made a lot of friends that day.'

Appreciating what others really go through

We get caught up in our lives, our sorrows and frustrations, and find it hard to appreciate that others are in the same boat too. A very simple act of kindness is sometimes just to treat another person with respect, when our habitual response would be to act very differently, as this writer remarks:

'Telemarketers. I dislike them as much as anyone [but] I have always told myself that most of these people are simply trying to make a living with a tough and thankless job. I try to tell them quickly but kindly, in a cheerful, friendly way, that I am not in the market, that I want to save their time because I know they're trying to make a living and I wish them good luck. This, I find, is better than pretending to be interested, raising their hopes unnecessarily and wasting their and your time and patience. If you know someone so hard up they have to make ends meet by telemarketing, give them some flowers. Anyone who has to wallow through that much rejection every day needs some random kindness!'

And finally, a story I find remarkable in a person so young and which, once again, illustrates the natural kindness of children which we, as parents, could do more to appreciate, honour and support. This would be an act of kindness in itself, for our child and, in the longer term, for the world as a whole.

At the age of seven, Taylor Marie Crabtree started a business called TayBear, making and selling hand-painted hair

clips at local stores. But there was no selfish motivation in this; it wasn't that Taylor wanted extra spending money. Instead, she wanted the money so she could buy teddy bears for children with cancer. 'She said the kids probably have a lot of sadness in their lives and she wanted them to have something special to hug and to hug them back. Taylor wanted them to know that even strangers care about them,' said her mother. ↓

The media became interested in Taylor's project and she began to receive donations from strangers living thousands of miles away, from word of mouth alone. 'With her scribbly second grade handwriting, she wrote each person with her appreciation.' She then expanded the project to involve more than 100 other children, so they, too, could feel they were helping others.

'Taylor has been touched by so many people on her journey,' says her mother. 'One woman began questioning her about the project [and] was very suspicious about just where the collected money was going. Taylor gladly talked on and on about all the little steps she had taken to that point and about children and cancer. Looking on, I noticed that the woman's suspicions had turned to sadness. She became teary-eyed and stopped Taylor in mid-sentence. She then leaned down and hugged Taylor from a place deep in her heart. She told Taylor that her eight-year-old son had died just five months before from cancer and that he would have been very proud to have had one of her teddy bears.'

There have been some remarkable acts of healing as a result of Taylor's work, as her mother explains. 'Maybe it was the homeless man that had donated 11 cents and was surprised when he was told that was plenty of money to buy a hair clip. He and Taylor stood together choosing just the right hair clip for his lady friend. Or maybe it was the young woman who was flying back home the next day to say goodbye for the last time to her father, who was dying from cancer. Perhaps it was the man that drove all the way to his bank and back in order to buy a hair clip for his mom. He said that his dad had ↓

recently died from cancer [and] he wanted a child to have a teddy bear in his dad's memory. With each hair clip or donation have come so many memories and a realization that when working toward a goal from your heart, the journey too is part of the experience. Taylor once told me "how could people not see angels, they're everywhere".

As soon as I read Taylor's story, I sent her an email of appreciation and encouragement. Despite her heavy workload and her young age, she replied the next day, asking me about myself and telling me *I* was kind for thinking of her. If you would like to send her your thoughts, you can reach her via email at *TayBear@bigfoot.com*. I can't think of anybody more deserving of your kindness.

There is a wider, deeper, aspect to random acts of kindness, one of personal liberation as well as cultural change. We have been socialized since birth to see the world as a foregone conclusion, that this is the way things are, unchangeable, immutable, forlorn. The reality is different. By acting from our intuition and innate spiritual wisdom, we set off a whole chain reaction of world-changing events. The person's life we affect is energized, revitalized, and who knows what positive 'chance' event might flow from this? And we, in turn, are empowered by the recognition of our own ability to make a real difference in the world and, as a consequence, our relationship with, and to, others is changed for the better.

The effect of random acts of kindness is deeply shamanic – and you don't have to be a shaman to practise it!

EXERCISE: RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS, SENSELESS ACTS OF BEAUTY – SOME SUGGESTIONS

- Make coffee for the whole office, especially if you don't do it normally, and particularly if you are the boss.
- Send your partner a note of appreciation, telling them all the things you really like about them. Don't stop writing until you find at least ten – and make them things you wouldn't

normally have the courage to say to their face. Slip it into their coat pocket or their lunchbox so they find it at random some time later.

- Write to your local newspaper to tell them about someone you know and admire, who is doing a really great job in the face of personal difficulties – why she's a wonderful mother, all the things he does for charity, whatever. Send the person themselves a copy of your letter too – anonymously.
- Tell your child today all the reasons why you love them and why they are truly special. Tell them you're sorry for any of the things you now regret, that you were learning to be a good parent and you know you got it wrong sometimes, but from now on you will try your hardest to do better. And mean it.
- Forgive your own parents for their mistakes as well. Tell them you forgive them if you wish but, more importantly, forgive them in your heart.
- And forgive yourself for the things you have done to others which still bother you. Make amends and let the feeling go.
- Next time you are asked for money by a homeless person, give it graciously and ask what else you can do to help. Nobody asks to be homeless.
- Spend some time thinking about the worst case of bureaucratic meddling in your life that you can remember – when some faceless bureaucrat who was 'just doing his job' really ruined your day through some mindless action of the system – then send them flowers. Believe it or not, they're human too – and you might just start a kindness revolution which will bring back some humanity to the system!

The remit of the 'neo-shaman' is to use all of his skills, all of the tools at his disposal, in the most creative way possible, to heal, to balance and to support the Earth and all its children. There is nothing more natural than using our innate love and generosity in the battle for world and self-empowerment.