



# The Learning Clinic

## Education & Career Development Agency

Most people say that it is the intellect which makes a great scientist. They are wrong: it is character.

— Albert Einstein

Character, in the long run, is the decisive factor in the life of an individual and of nations alike.

— Theodore Roosevelt

Character, not circumstance, makes the person.

— Booker T. Washington

What lies behind us and what lies before us are small matters compared to what lies within us.

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

If you will think about what you ought to do for other people, your character will take care of itself. Character is a by-product, and any man who devotes himself to its cultivation in his own case will become a selfish prig.

— Woodrow Wilson

We are what we seem to be.

— Willard Gaylin

Our lives teach us who we are.

— Salman Rushdie



## Living A Life That Matters Is All About Being Nice

*REFLECTIONS* by...

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I get to meet a lot of university students who are studying to become teachers. I also have contact with a number of university and college graduates who are desperately searching for a chance to begin a meaningful career. Some of the people I speak to are actually at the beginning of their teaching career.

One of the things that become clearly evident as I get to know these people is that each of them sincerely wants to make a difference in the lives of others. They want to “matter” to others and to do wonderful things with their life. I love being around such youthful exuberance. Young people have beautiful dreams and are not afraid of anything. Life is like a huge Christmas gift that they can open each and every day.

I also get to talk to a lot of “older” people from my own generation. Many people who were born as part of the “baby boom” generation are also desperately searching for meaning in their life. Indeed, many of us look back on our life and wonder what it all meant. What have we done to make a difference? What have we done that “matters” in the whole scheme of things?

Those questions were on my mind the other day when I read a short passage about a lady named Marta, who was also searching for something. She found it while traveling on a bus. Here is her story.

Marta was a hard-working single mother. When her minister sermonized about “living a life that matters,” she worried that working to raise her kids and going to church wasn’t enough. So while on the bus to work one day she made a list of other jobs she could do and volunteer work she could try.

Sylvia, an elderly woman who was on the bus that morning, saw the worry on Marta’s face and asked what was wrong. Marta explained her problem. Sylvia said, “Oh my, did your minister actually say you weren’t doing enough?”

“No,” Marta said. “But I don’t know how to live ‘a life that matters’ I want to make a difference in the life of others.”

“You don’t have to change jobs or do more volunteer work,” Sylvia consoled her. “It’s enough that you’re a good mother. But if you want to do more, think about what

you can do while you are doing what you already do. It's not about WHAT you do, but HOW you do it."

"You don't understand," Marta said. "I sell hamburgers. How do I make that significant?"

"How many people do you deal with every day?" Sylvia asked.

"Two to three hundred."

"Well, what if you set out to cheer, encourage, teach, or inspire as many of those people as you could? A compliment, a bit of advice, a cheerful hello, or a warm smile can start a chain reaction that lights up lives like an endless string of Christmas bulbs."

"But that's just being nice," Marta protested.

"Right," said Sylvia. "Niceness can change lives."

Marta looked at the old woman. "What do you do?"

"I was a housekeeper until I retired," Sylvia said. "Now I just ride the bus talking to people."

Let me repeat a section from this story: "If you want to do more, think about what you can do while you are doing what you already do." What a profound philosophy. If you want a slogan to live by this is it. "THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU CAN DO WHILE YOU ARE DOING WHAT YOU ALREADY DO". This is a rule that EVERYBODY can live by, regardless of what they are doing with their life.

In today's story Sylvia spends her day riding the bus talking to people just like Marta. All Sylvia is doing is being nice, but as she said, "Niceness can change lives."

And so, no matter where you are in your life right now, you CAN make a huge difference and you CAN live a life that matters, simply by "thinking about what you can do while you are doing what you already do." Just by being nice to other people, you can change their whole approach and outlook on life: just by being nice.

Don't forget, "It's not about what you do, but how you do it." that will make you stand out from others and will allow you the satisfaction of knowing that you did indeed live a life that matters.

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