

Small steps can better our world

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When I first heard of the ethical principle that one should “leave the world in better shape than you found it” this sounded like a very good idea. However, as I began to think of this ethic and the practical applications it might have for our lives, some questions came to mind. The main idea behind this principle is that we ought to do those things that make our world better and certainly not worse than we find it.

In a world exceeding seven billion people one wonders what hope we can have as individuals to make noticeable improvements. In 2012, Time magazine published an interesting special edition called “The 100 Most Influential People of All Time”. Among the great people listed were Mother Teresa, Charles Darwin, Plato and Aristotle, Christopher Columbus, Copernicus, Thomas Jefferson, Nelson Mandela, Michelangelo, Marie Curie, Alexander Graham Bell and Abraham Lincoln. Certainly all these people were influential and changed the course of world history. In modern terms they were all *game changers* in positive directions.

For most of us, when we think of the effects we can have in changing our world in positive ways we may likely be overwhelmed concerning our chances of doing so. Where would we start? How can we have an optimistic hope that we as individuals may impact positively on seven billion fellow humans or on world history.

I think we each have to begin modestly to have positive affects upon those closest to us. We can start by thinking how we relate to our family members, our closest neighbours, and those whom we have contact with in our daily work or even in our recreation times. If we are ethically caring, honest, helpful and generous people, we will at least be able to change the lives and the memories, and to a small degree, the history of those around us. Those closest to us are a most important part of our world and hopefully we can be a beneficial part of their world experience. We can have more immediate impact on those close to us than we can on people far away.

Next, we can associate with the community we live in. There may be ways in which we can unite forces with others in community projects. This will require joining forces, and sometimes hands, with those who have different religions, different ethnic origins, and even different languages as we learn to work together.

In order to take the next step we will need to be better informed about what actions are ethically positive and which are not. Here, we need to read, to listen to current news events, and seek a broader ethical view of those actions that are good and valuable and

empathetic. We will strive to know as much as we can about the culture and the goals of those outside our own immediate communities. We need to start to think of ourselves as citizens with a world view.

Finally, to get to the level of those listed in Time magazine's 100 most influential people we will need to touch on ethical values which are deep within humankind. We will endeavor to understand what values are shared by our fellow humans and to regard them as part of the large world-wide family of humanity.

Is this an easy task to achieve? Certainly it is not. It may be easier for some than others. It requires intelligence, caring, devotion and the best and highest sensitivity that we can attain. Most of us will never reach the achievements of those listed as "The 100 most influential People of all time". But we have it within us to take the first steps. We can make a difference in the lives of others if we begin today by doing our best for those who are closest to each of us. If we can accomplish even that much we will have begun to leave the world in better shape than we found it.