

Ten Minutes

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In this generation we sometimes forget how to communicate with people if it is not via text or Snapchat. We forget to take time and slow down. Most of our lives are crazy busy trying to balance school, sports, relationships, family, work and just about everything else. In Thomas Friedman's book *Thank You for Being Late: An Optimist's Guide to Thriving in the Age of Accelerations*, he stresses that when we have time, it is good to ponder one's thoughts and simply allow ourselves to slow down. As Friedman highlights, "When you press the pause button on a machine, it stops. But when you press the pause button on human beings they start" (4). When we allow ourselves to reset we become better people and community members. But when we don't allow ourselves to reset, we spiral downward into a dark place. A simple pause and a press of the reset button can go a long way. To me, these are the makers and breakers in a community.

After a long day of school, I stumbled into the Common Ground café ready to devour a club sandwich with no ham and extra mayo. When I ambled up to order, an elderly woman sitting all alone—reading a newspaper—caught my eye and I quickly flashed her a smile. While I was waiting for my order to be ready, she struck up a conversation with me. She asked me my age, and I responded politely that I was sixteen. After the usual awkward small talk, she started to explain her experiences as a young sixteen year old. She told me how she and her best friends from high school—fifty years later—still have coffee together once a week. As we continued our conversation, an older gentleman wearing a Minnesota Twins baseball cap walked into the café. With a grin from ear to ear, the lady introduced me to her husband. She then happily explained how they were high school sweethearts and are still very much in love. With each story, there

was an immense sense of pride. About ten minutes later the worker handed me my sandwich, and I said my goodbyes to the sweet lady. As I was walking out I remember her saying “You seem like a very kind young lady; enjoy your day.” As I opened the door to my car I could not stop thinking how pleasant and refreshing that was. I easily could have been on my phone for ten minutes waiting, but it was so nice to learn something new about a stranger. I hope when I am older to be the type of person like her.

Although these simple series of events were nothing out of the ordinary, they made me think. To be a thoughtful community member doesn't always mean grand gestures. Yes, those are great, but an impact can be made by something much simpler. A simple smile and a few quick words could brighten ones day. Everything about a thoughtful community member traces back to kindness. I did not do anything besides simply have a conversation and the lady was very appreciative for the kind words we shared. Although this conversation did not have to happen, I learned a lot about someone in ten short minutes. It made me slow down and reflect on my own life. I believe I crossed paths with this lady to remind me to take a step back. She was the epitome of a thoughtful community member. The little conversation made me feel good. And I now want to try and spread that same feeling to as many people as I can.

Work Cited

Friedman, Thomas L. *Thank You for Being Late: An Optimist's Guide to Thriving in the Age of Accelerations*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016.