SPREADING HAPPINESS

The S in BELIEFS stands for spreading happiness.

Mark Twain said, “The best way to cheer yourself up is to try to cheer someone else up.”

Make it a mission in your life to spread happiness and positive energy to those whose paths cross yours. Smile at a stranger or a friend. Share an uplifting story. Be a person that makes others feel good when they are in your presence.

Here is a simple way to spread positive energy. When someone asks, “How are you?”, what do you say? If it’s your very best friend or a close family member, he or she may actually want to hear all your troubles, but if it’s a coworker, acquaintance or stranger, trust me, that person does not what to hear anything negative.

If you are experiencing nausea, body aches, sadness or frustration, people in your outer circle probably don’t care. If you say, “I was up all night and I’m so tired!”, you may get murmurs of sympathy, but you’ve done nothing to lift the mood of the other person. Most likely all the other person is thinking is that they are glad that whatever is wrong in your life is happening to you and not them.

Whenever you can, respond to the question “how are you” with as upbeat a response as you can. I heard of someone who always answered the question of how he was with the statement, “If I was any better, I would be twins!”

I used to know a man whose typical answer was “Outstanding!” Answers like “outstanding”, “wonderful” or “fantastic” tend to bring a smile to the face of the other person.

**Finding Reasons to Smile and Share Them**

There is no doubt that life can be hard. You can find reasons to scowl, growl and complain if you really want to focus on that.

But, what you focus on expands.

If you go through life grumbling and complaining, you may not realize that you might be dragging down the moods of those around you. Your own feelings of negativity may intensify and spread to those around you like wildfire.

Instead, look for reasons to smile, and share a smile with those around you. Even on the worst of days, there is just about always at least one reason to smile.

In the book *Until I Say Good-Bye,* as Susan Spencer-Wendel’s health deteriorated and she lost more and more of her ability to move, she continued to find a way to smile at those around her. Her husband said, “If you can smile, I can smile.”

In my own life, while my husband was on hospice care and approaching the end of his life journey, I had to continue to work. A coworker said to me at the time, “I don’t know how you do it, but you keep on smiling.” Several years after my husband died, hers died as well, and she told me that she held on to the thought that I had had the courage and grace to smile through the pain, and that she was then able to do so too.

You never know when a smile that you share might make a difference in someone else’s life.

**The Power of Social Media**

Today social media is a powerful tool that allows us to connect with other people far and wide. Ordinary people connect with celebrities. We are able to find and communicate with people from the past that we never thought we would see or speak to again.

What messages are you sharing with other people?

Some people share ordinary, trivial moments of their lives. Some share angry, divisive political messages or complain about the bad things that happen on any given day.

If you post on social media that you are angry, sad, frustrated, jealous or a victim of unfortunate circumstances, you are spreading negative energy. Without even realizing it, you may be bringing others down.

If everyone posted positive, uplifting messages, we just might help to lift each other up rather than drag each other down.

Consider finding something positive to share today on Facebook or Twitter. Look for a positive quote, a beautiful picture or a tidbit of happiness.

Spreading happiness is like throwing a boomerang. It always comes back.

As Oprah Winfrey said, “The more you praise and celebrate your life, the more there is in life to celebrate.”

**Doing What You Can for Others**

There’s a lot you can do to help those around you. Look for a way to give to life’s fellow travelers today.

Eleanor Roosevelt said, “When you cease to make a contribution, you begin to die.”

Your contribution can be as complex as writing a song that people continue to sing long after you are gone to writing a book that brings joy and touches the hearts of others to building a house or planting a tree that will live on long after you are gone. Or it can be as simple as holding open a door for someone behind you or offering a ride to a neighbor without a car.

It can even be as simple as sharing a smile or an uplifting story with someone else.

Contribute your talents, your listening ear, your time and your energy to those around you.

We are all in this journey called Life together.

Those around you need your special contributions. They need you to do what you can.

The easiest thing you can do today is spread a little bit of happiness starting with a smile.