

# The Courage to Care

By Wendyl K. Leslie

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I got to poking through some of the old things I'd saved and came across a wonderful little article from an issue of "Guideposts Magazine." It's by Arthur Gordon and is titled "The Rewards of Caring."

He tells the story of how once, as a small boy, he was witness to a near-tragedy. At the beach, a woman stepped off a sandbar into deep, swift water and panicked. At least 20 adults in bathing suits watched, apparently paralyzed, until suddenly a young man ran up, plunged in fully clothed, and brought the woman out.

As Arthur Gordon described the episode later to his parents, his admiration for the young man was matched by the contempt he felt for those who failed to act. She was drowning, and they didn't even seem to care.

His father looked at him thoughtfully and said, "The world often seems divided between those who care and those who don't care enough. But don't judge too harshly. It takes courage to care greatly."

It does take courage to care, to open your heart and react with sympathy or compassion or indignation or enthusiasm when it is easier--and sometimes safer--not to get involved. But people who take the risk, who deliberately discard the armor of indifference, make a tremendous discovery: The more things you care about, and the more intensely you care, the more alive you become.

Caring or not caring can spell the difference between success and failure in a job, in a marriage--in every human relationship. As Emerson said, "Nothing great was every

achieved without enthusiasm." And what is enthusiasm but passionate caring?

A famous jeweler once sold a magnificent ruby after one of his salespeople had failed to interest the customer. Asked how he did it, the jeweler said, "My clerk is an excellent man, an expert on precious stones. There's just one difference between us: He knows jewels, but I "love" them. I care what happens to them, who wears them. The customers sense this. It makes them want to buy--and they do."

In such cases, of course, caring ultimately brings tangible reward, but the great philosophers and religious leaders have always taught this paradox: The most rewarding form of caring is caring without hope of reward. Fortunately for mankind, the world is full of people who go quietly through life performing, as Wordsworth put it, "little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and love."

The volunteer worker at the hospital, the unpaid canvasser for the community chest, the neighbor who offers to take care of your children while you settle a new house--such people have no ulterior motive and expect no recompense. They act because they care, and their actions--multiplied my millions--supply the force that keeps the human race moving upward from barbarism along the path of growth.

There are people who say that if you care too much, you can get hurt. That's right--you win some, and you lose some. But the alternative is a pretty bleak and uninteresting existence.

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Recently nominated for the 53rd edition of The Marquis' Who's Who in America, Wendyl is also the author of Serve to Lead: Mastering the Leadership Style of Jesus. Wendyl invites you to visit his website and subscribe to his weekly journal at: <http://www.servetolead.net>

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