

Huna, Aloha and Kindness

By Pete Dalton



A Fundamental Principle

"This is my simple religion. There is no need for temples; no need for complicated philosophy. Our own brain, our own heart is our temple; the philosophy is kindness."

- The Dalai Lama

Kindness is important. The quote above from the Dalai Lama points to how kindness is the core philosophy at the foundation of everything and it really does seem that when we look at the major world philosophies and belief systems, kindness in one form or another seems to be at the heart of things.

Huna is no exception. In fact, with the Aloha Spirit as its cornerstone, Huna places explicit focus on all the practices associated with Aloha of which kindness is one. It is interesting that even in modern day Hawaii the Spirit of Aloha is respected and maintained. The Aloha Spirit is considered a 'state law' in Hawaii. It serves as a principle to guide government officials in conducting their duties. Chapter 5 of Hawaii Revised Statutes states:

"Aloha Spirit" is the coordination of mind and heart within each person. It brings each person to the self. Each person must think and emote good feelings to others".

What a wonderful thing indeed.

Kindness is Natural and Beneficial

Being kind and practicing Aloha is natural. It is thought that the Spirit of Aloha was significant in the Hawaiian islands because of their remoteness and the need to get along with others in order to survive and thrive. Being kind is a key way to foster harmony and cooperation and the positive feelings associated with kindness help boost our creativity and desire to flourish and grow.

"Kindness is a language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see".

Mark Twain

This quote points to the almost magical power that kindness can have. Even something apparently as simple as kindness has been shown to have a huge range of proven benefits and these are not only experienced by the recipients of kind acts but also by the practitioners of kindness. These benefits are not just at a behavioural level but can be experienced on an emotional, physical, social and spiritual level.

Some of the proven benefits of practicing kindness include:

- Improved mental health including reduced stress and anxiety, increased calmness and life satisfaction
- Improved physical health including lower blood pressure, improved heart health, increased energy, and a strengthened immune system
- Providing a sense of purpose and contributing to increased self-esteem.
- Building and strengthening relationships and leading to a sense of community and connection.

Kindness can play a hugely important part in our own self care. If we practice kindness and actively build it into our routines, kindness can be a useful aid to self management and wellbeing.

As well as benefitting us personally, kindness obviously benefits others. Kindness can even help to make the world a better place. By performing acts of kindness, you can help create a more positive and compassionate world for everyone.

I love that practicing kindness can have a ripple effect, as the people who receive acts of kindness are more likely to pay it forward and be kind to others as well. So, when we perform an act of kindness, it has an impact on the person we are being kind to and that impact can then spread further outwards, affecting the people around them and eventually reaching the far corners of the world.

I also love the idea that you may not even know who benefits from your acts of kindness and you may be reaching more people than you can ever be aware of. Of course, none of this should come as a surprise as we reflect on the principle of *Kala* and how we, and everything, is all connected and intertwined. How we treat others affects us personally in many different ways.

Challenges to Being Kind

So if kindness is natural to us and so beneficial for us personally and for the world around us, we have to ask the question, 'why are we not more kind more often'? In particular why are there times when we may find it difficult to be kind to others?

Here are some of my thoughts on this:

Focussing on differences. We may be less inclined to be kind to others when we focus on our differences. In some cases, focussing on differences can be useful but not when it blocks kindness and results in division and disharmony. Sometimes it is useful to take a step back and reflect on the fact that we are all connected and we share a whole load of things in common, probably more than we do differences. Noticing our shared common humanity – our similar wants and needs, challenges and aspirations and our shared experience of the human condition can help us feel inclined to practice kindness towards others.

A simple game that you can play to help you develop flexibility and notice common humanity, is to bring to mind someone who you consider to be very different to you, as different as possible - almost a polar opposite, and find as many things that you have in common. Once you get into the flow, it can go on for a long time and be very insightful!

Missing the positive intention. Sometimes we may forget that most of the time other people are doing the best with what they can. It may be that their behaviour does not appear as we would like, however, often when we really examine it they might be doing the best that they can at that time. Sometimes even behaviour that we would not personally choose can have a positive intention beneath it. Noticing this can help us feel kinder towards others.

Believing we can't make a difference. Another reason we may not practice kindness is because we may doubt that we can make much of a difference to anything. However, it has been shown that even an apparent small act of kindness can make a big difference (if you want a nice illustration of this you might like [Even The Smallest Action Can Have Big Consequences](#)).

One of the powerful assumptions of the Huna philosophy is that we can *always* do *something*, so we can always make a difference.

This brings to mind a tale of a young boy on the coast where hundreds and hundreds of star fish had been washed up onto the shore and were in the process of dehydrating and dying. The boy was there picking up the stranded starfish one by one and throwing them back into the water. As he was doing this a man walked by and asked the boy what he was doing. The boy replied, "I'm trying to save these starfish. If I don't throw them back into the water, they'll die." The man laughed and said, "But there are thousands of starfish on this beach. You can't possibly save them all. What difference does it make?" The boy picked up another starfish and threw it back into the sea. He looked at the man and said, "It makes a difference to this one." Then he continued to throw another one into the sea and then another one and he said "and that one and that one". The man was moved by the boy's

determination and kindness, and he realized that the boy was right. While it might be impossible to save every single starfish, it was possible to make a difference. The man decided to help the boy throw the starfish back into the sea, and together they made a small but meaningful impact on their little part of the world.

Practicing Kindness

We often refer to 'practicing' kindness and I think that is a good term. Kindness is not a passive thing - it requires action and intent. Of course, we also know what happens when we practice something – we get better at it and we develop a habit which makes it easier and easier to do. It's a virtuous circle.

There are so many ways that we can practice kindness and many are well documented so I won't list any here. As creative Huna Adventurers we can invent some new and novel ones for ourself or use some old tried and tested approaches. My hope is that after you read this you will commit to carrying out at least one (if not a thousand!) kind acts. I would love to hear what you do, so please feel free to contact me and share your experiences of helping to make the world a better place.

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