

***Kindness Speaks:  
Bringing Awareness to Words and Putting an End To Bullying***

Our life is centered around our words. Conversations spin through the air like music notes. Some of us speak with calculated efforts. Others, converse with utmost speed and little regard or accountability for what we say. Every day we use our words to make a point, a joke, criticize, complain or even bully. This is where we need to be more aware!

So I am asking you to take the "Kindness Speaks" challenge and for 21 days be aware of how many times you are:

- Negative: Notice if a story you're relaying is negative in tone and how well it is received!
- Complaining: Notice when you are complaining and how it affects the people around you!
- Gossiping: Notice how often are you gossiping about someone that you care about!
- Criticizing: Notice when you are critical about anything!
- Bullying: Notice when what you say can be perceived as Bullying!

All these situations happen to us every day and we don't usually notice at all. People say "oh, I'm just sarcastic" or "I was just kidding" as if that makes it acceptable. Every day kids and adults alike are bullied! Friends, strangers and even loved ones use their words in ways that leave us feeling insignificant, less of a person. *See my inspirational stories and why I chose to challenge myself, below.*

Becoming aware of the words we are using in our daily lives will allow us to be kinder, more thoughtful!

Now you ask yourself, "How can I get involved and what do I have to do?" It's easy! Join our Facebook group, "Kindness Speaks" then on November 21<sup>st</sup> we will start our challenge. December 12<sup>th</sup> will be our last day of the challenge and we will come together as a new community and discuss how "Kindness Speaks" transformed our lives! The money collected will go to "Sunserve, Youth Support Groups" and a check will be donated on December 12<sup>th</sup>. [www.sunserve.org/youth](http://www.sunserve.org/youth)

Now some of you might be saying, "This is right in the middle of the holidays, I can't do this!" My reply is "What better time of year is there to *be aware of your words* then when you will be socializing at work functions, parties and family events!" These are the people you spend most of your time with and what better gift can you give then "The Gift of Kindness." See below for the results from my family vacation.

Not everyone is ready for the complete 21 days so we have options. If this is you, try the 14 day challenge. Other options are 10 days or 7 days. We just ask that we all start

on the same day, November 21. After you complete your 7, 10 or 14 days and you find yourself seeing real results in your life, feel free to continue on and complete the 21 day challenge.

We recommend you declare your challenge to the important people in your everyday life. You will be amazed at the positive response you will get and the support you will receive from them. They, along with your own awareness and honesty are all you will need for this challenge. *See my inspirational stories below.*

On our Facebook group you will have the opportunity to post about your successes and pitfalls. This will be our space to be honest about what is happening in your life and how the "Kindness Speaks" challenge is affecting your lives.

Being aware of our words is also, just the beginning. When we find ourselves spreading *Negativity, Complaining, Gossip, Criticizing or Bullying*, we need to clean it up. Let me explain. We have now declared our challenge to our family, friends and colleagues. Then we start the challenge on November 21<sup>st</sup>. On the second day we gossip with a co-worker. BAM!!! You need to clean it up! Stop the conversation, recognize the words you were using and apologize for spreading gossip.

This might sound small and trivial but what if I said you were gossiping about someone you really care about and the only things you were saying were mean spirited and BULLYING, it would take on a whole different meaning. This happens every day.

Rules for the challenge "Kindness Speaks":

1. Sign up on Facebook and declare your time period. (21, 14, 10, 7 days)
2. Donate your \$ 21 to "Sunserve Youth Support Groups"
3. Inform the important people around you about the challenge so you can enlist their help.
4. Clean up any Negativity, Complaining, Gossip, Criticizing or Bullying that arises.
5. Post on the Facebook group page your successes and pitfalls. Openly discuss the effects this is having on your life and read about others in the challenge
6. Join us for the celebration and commiserate with other challengers on the effects "Kindness Speaks" has had on your life. (not required for the challenge but appreciated)

Remember, this is an awareness challenge, not a competition. Our main objective is to *Bring Awareness to Words*. "**Kindness Speaks**" could end bullying all together with your help!

My Inspirational Stories and Why I Chose to Challenge Myself:

Sometimes, I use humor as a tool for people to like me. While networking with good friends and colleagues I made an attempt to be funny. I created a funny story around

networking. They seemed to enjoy the story and so I trudged on. Then it happened! My joke turned a corner and I pulled a good friend into the joke. The words were coming out of my mouth and it was too late. I had now said things that put a good friend in an uncomfortable space. Wow! In one instant, I damaged my reputation with the people I care for the most. It was then I realized, this is not the person I believe I am inside, nor the person I want other to see me as.

Results from a Family Vacation:

This past summer I went on a family vacation (16 family members vacationing in a 9 bedroom 9 bath home in Costa Rica) right in the middle of my 21 days. I was nervous about how my challenge would be received. Not only was everyone supportive but they thanked me when the vacation finished for my positive contribution and what a difference it made on how we all communicated with each other. One family member was so moved by my challenge she decided to challenge herself and examine the impact it will have on work and her personal life. I didn't expect the incredible results, kind words and support I received in return.

Results from Declaring My Challenge:

While declaring my challenge I received tremendous support from friends and colleagues. They were very intrigued about me being more aware of what I say. Some of them had good examples of when I WAS Negative, Complaining, Gossiping, Criticizing and Bullying. During my challenge they pointed out when they felt I wasn't being aware of what I was saying. The challenge really showed me how my friends and colleagues perceived me. After my challenge my relationships drastically improved because now I was being perceived as a kinder, nicer person who really cared about the people around me.

Thanks

*Drew Miller*