

Headline	Goodwill hunting		
MediaTitle	New Sunday Times		
Date	06 Apr 2014	Color	Full Color
Section	Local News	Circulation	156,910
Page No	19	Readership	295,000
Language	English	ArticleSize	303 cm <sup>2</sup>
Journalist	N/A	AdValue	RM 9,885
Frequency	Weekly	PR Value	RM 29,655



# Goodwill hunting

**SOUL THERAPY:** That little encouragement, that gentle pat on the head goes a long way in lifting our spirit

**W**E were walking along Arlington Street in Boston recently when I heard someone shouting at me from a Pajero which had stopped at the traffic lights. I turned my head and saw a lady waving at me excitedly. She shouted "We have the same handbag!" and simultaneously lifted up her handbag and shook it vigorously to show me that what she said was absolutely true.

I laughed as I saw that I was also carrying the handbag with bird prints all over it. Then to further accentuate the fun mood, I unbuttoned my coat to reveal a matching bird print frock beneath it. I bought my dress and bag from Dublin and I wondered whether she got the same from downtown Boston. Well, that definitely caused an adrenalin rush.

Then we made our way towards Beacon Street where the famed Cheers pub (of the American sitcom television series with the same name that ran for 11 seasons from 1982 to 1993) stood. I saw two tourists trying to make sense of the vicinity by poring over a small black and white map of Boston. In my pocket was a big coloured map of Boston which I took from the concierge. I related what I saw to Michael and I was caught in a to-do or not-to-do situation as we walked past the couple. Michael gave me the affirmation and I ran back to the couple and gave them my big and coloured map, and their broad smiles said it all.

What is it about random acts of kindness that make our day?

These may be very small stuff, but yet, again they leave a fuzzy feeling behind, after all, we are tripartite beings — body, soul and spirit.

What touches our souls lifts up the spirit. That little encourage-

ment, that gentle pat on the head goes a long way. We talk of chocolates being soul food and shopping as soul therapy. We can see what we look like in the mirror and we can try to improve what we are not happy with.

But it is hard to see our emotions in the mirror and even if we do, we are seldom taught how to recognise our emotions and how to deal with them.

So what am I trying to say?

We often forget that although we look strong on the outside, we are fragile inside. Being constantly battered by words, accusations, injustices and name-calling leave us frail. Being told what to say and what not to say far too often enough leave us wondering if we could say anything to anyone at all. Being misunderstood because of our perceptions or our choice of words make us wish we had shared none of our opinions at all. We may be made of rock but constant chiselling will chip off many bits of us over time.

So why can't we have acts of kindness instead of destruction?

To be kind is to be in the shoes of the other person, to empathise, and to walk with her and hold her hand and show that you care. To be kind is not to bring up the past over and over again. To be kind is to encourage but also to correct at the same time when you can see another person walking down the path that you would not like to go yourself. To be kind is to understand that not everything is personal and not everything is about you.

To be kind is also to take stock of our own emotional health. We cannot blame another person for what we are or are not. To quote Ann Bradford, "Tell the negative committee that meets inside your head to shut up and sit down." We owe it to ourselves to develop confidence, self-esteem and self-respect. When

we have been told to do this and that for too long, we need to step aside and say to ourselves, "Do we want to fall into someone else's mould or can we be ourselves?"

It is never easy to see the wood for the trees when we are in the thick of it. No one can identify with the intensity of emotions that we go through, and the choice is ours alone to decide what we want to do with our lives.

It is the stuff that we are made of that anchors us. I had often wondered how huge trees could be toppled in a storm and yet when I saw how shallow the roots were, it all makes sense.

When our emotional health is in order, we have every reason to live.

*All that is gold does not glitter,  
Not all those who wander are lost;  
The old that is strong does not wither,  
Deep roots are not reached by the frost.*

- J.R.R. Tolkien

↳ kohslhoward@gmail.com

To be kind is to be in the shoes of the other person, to empathise, and to walk with her and hold her hand and show that you care.

Dr Koh Soo Ling was a lecturer at Universiti Teknologi Mara and now spends her days enjoying life as it is