

Reach Out



FINDING YOUR PLACE IN THE COMMUNITY

Week 10: Understanding

People's lives are messy. We all face struggles in our lives, struggles with family, our health, our friends or lack of friends, emotions. Life hardly ever happens the way we expect it to, but that is part of the adventure. Bob Dylan said, "Be kind because everyone you'll ever meet is fighting a hard battle." What hard battle are you fighting? The key to not allowing the hard battles to weigh you down is to allow the struggles to bring about mercy, compassion, and understanding.

No matter how messy your life may be, there are many people in the world who have it far worse than you. Life is not a competition of who has it worse - it is about reaching out to those in need and offering them your love and understanding. It is through our individual struggles that we can come to better understand the struggles of others and then work to lessen those struggles. Don't allow resistance to tell you that you can't help, that a person's struggles are too bad, or that a person is too far gone to be helped. Start with small actions - give a hug, provide a listening ear, smile at someone. You never know how much power there can be in a simple smile to a person who is struggling. A smile can provide hope to a person who otherwise feels hopeless. Take action, and you, too, will begin to fill with hope. Don't give in to despair. Life is messy, but if we allow the mess to bring out our best for others, hope will win out, and our messy lives will become a lot happier.

Challenge: Understanding

Think about the struggles in your own life, and think of someone you know who provides you with hope in the face of your struggles. How do they help you? Now think of a person you know who is struggling in some way. Offer that person some encouragement this week. It doesn't have to be big; just let them know that you care about them. Also, consider that sometimes people hide their struggles and put on a happy face to keep people from knowing of their struggles. Let the people who seem happy in your life know that you care about them. Sometimes that one small gesture can turn a person's day completely around and bring them the hope they need.