

Empowering Kids in an Uncertain Time

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“Sometimes we get so caught up in trying to accomplish something big, that we fail to notice the little things that give life its magic.”

This year has been hard on our youth. The foe is not visible, but we are essentially at war and the impact on the kids is similar. They have been told to stay home, stay closed in, their freedom largely reduced to tightly controlled interactions with friends. Our teachers speak about their students’ heightened anxiety, the loss of independence, and lack of connection; kids have largely lost their identity as peers and students. This pandemic has pushed them back into their homes, weakened or severed many of their outside connections, and left them identifying more as children and siblings rather than peers, students, and adolescents. Middle schoolers are unable to do what they should be doing, starting to take bigger steps outward into their community and the world.

As a parent of three children, two in high school and one in elementary school, I watched as they passed through phases of anger, sadness, resentment, and finally acceptance. I tried to help but largely felt powerless. And I jumped at every opportunity that afforded them a sense of empowerment.

Now, months later, it is clear that this situation is likely here to stay for some time. It is not something that we can tolerate with heads down until we are able to return to life as it was before. To the contrary, we must approach it with ambition rather than passive tolerance.

What can we learn during this time? How can we adapt and adjust and keep discovering more about ourselves? What can we do to help others?

We have to decide to be positive, reclaim control over our lives, and find the magic that exists through small acts of kindness and empathy.



In the spring, rather than turning away from ThinkGive so that they could simply manage their overwhelming workload, our teachers instead leaned harder into the program. They saw how ThinkGive offered a space for students to connect, take action, and focus on the positive. Our program is about empowerment. It can awaken something special inside kids: inspire them to care for themselves, appreciate what they have, connect with and care for others, and make positive decisions. Our children – or any of us – do not need to accomplish “big” things during this time; instead, we all need to notice, celebrate, and understand the impact that small actions and moments can have on our communities.

As we approach the fall with looming uncertainty about our students’ school experience, when we are all unable to hug a friend or shake a hand, we are hopeful that ThinkGive provides our teachers a path to celebrate the power of small actions – a word of support, a note of encouragement, a recognition of a friendship. It will offer something real and necessary to our teachers and kids – a space in which connection is paramount, where kids are empowered to act rather than turn away, and where they discover that their actions, however small, can affect real change. It will inspire students to convert intention into action and feel empowered that they can live a magical life ... and bring some magic to the lives of others, too.

