

being Human

By David E. Nelson

I have appreciated the music of Kris Kristofferson for most of my adult life, and I especially like the lyrics, "Ain't it just like a human? Here comes that rainbow again." It suggests, for me, a new way to look at our humanness. For too many, being human is an excuse for making a mistake or doing something wrong. When someone fails I have heard the words, "After all I am only human." That attitude implies being human is somehow a mistake or something to recover from.

Being fully human is a rare and wonderful gift we have been given. We are unique in the world and can nurture that gift by fully living our human possibilities. In every relationship in the office, the shop, or at home, we can be human and recognize other people as unique and wonderful individuals.

Recently, I had a new crown for one of my teeth. In the past, the process took two trips to the dentist. During the first one, the tooth was prepared and a temporary crown placed on the tooth. Then several weeks later I returned and the permanent crown was applied. In my case, several years ago, I had to return a third time because the first "permanent crown" had to be reshaped again. It was all a bummer for this patient.

In my last adventure with a new crown, I was in the office only once. The preparation was finished, and I waited as the crown was prepared and readied. It took a couple of hours, but what a better way. As I was thanking my dentist for being a great human being, I quoted Kris Kristofferson. He appreciated my gratitude. I know the crown-making machine must cost a bundle, but it improved the quality of the process and made my trip a little less burdensome. Good human beings improve the lives of others.

When I enter the office, I am always pleased the greeting is warm and personal. The office staff knows my name, and they ask about my family. That is a good human thing to do. It takes a small effort to make a large impression. I like having name tags so I can also call them by name. We humans are relationship animals and enjoy the respect and kindness that is shown. Friendly human beings bring joy to others.

As an Appreciative Inquiry Coach I want to change the paradigm on what it means when we use the word "human." This special word can carry a lot of power if we reclaim the unique and positive meaning. Let's begin with children and teach them that being human is both the path and goal for wonderful living. I seek to review my thinking and behavior as a human being and celebrate the amazingly good things that are possible.

I like the lyrics of the Kristofferson song for another reason. The story reminds me human kindness is contagious. Acts of concern become seeds for more acts of concern. A friendly greeting results in more friendliness by others. I have often observed the expansion and spreading of a kind word or deed. Like a rock thrown into a pond, the ripples extend out and out to touch others. I did not like the old cartoon when the man was put down at the office, comes home and puts down his spouse, who picks on the kids, who hurt the dog. That is not the way it should work. When we treat each other as humans, we start a different cycle. One good deed breeds another, and more and more good things happen. Gentle human beings add value to those around them.

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My city, like most other cities, has experienced too much crime and hatred recently. A man driven by hatred toward one religious group took a gun and attacked a community center and nursing home and killed several people. Paradoxically, the victims were not from the group he hated. Such crimes tear at a community's heart and bring many emotions to the surface. I am pleased that in this case the overwhelming response by many of my sisters and brothers was to be human. They reached out to stand in solidarity with the attacked group. We united in a memorial that became a beacon for the city to remember the victims and the human connections that make this a great place to live. Humans build a better world through their compassion and commitments.

It is hard to change the narrative of a family, an office, community, or world. Some seem stuck in past hurt and pain. Some still believe the other must change first. But being human is to take the lead in creating relationships and spaces where humans connect with other humans in beautiful and life-changing ways.