RENEW helps people who juggle work, family and community commitments sustain (or regain) their enthusiasm, effectiveness and purpose.

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Thinking Small
Linda Hawes Clever, MD

Really, folks, it feels too fast and loud out there. Too much frazzle. Too many screeches and accusations. There is no universal quick fix, yet perhaps we could do some spot welding.

I got to thinking about little things we could do to tame the superheated dark flows that threaten to engulf us. What can we do in an instant (or so) that would brighten the world around us?

How long does it take to wave? Or smile? Or say, “Thank you?” Small amount of time; big glow.

Awhile back, a Conversation Group came up with some 15-second solutions: breathe deeply a few times · have a snack · uncross everything – open up · call a time out · stretch · count to 10 · stop whatever you’re doing · hug. Well, one person did say, “Scream!” The results? Relax. Be calm. Feel better. Psychologist Janet Meiselman adds that a brief pause can save a lot of pain if you ask yourself, “Is what I’m about to say going to be helpful or harmful?”

While I was thinking small and thinking about peace, light and serenity, Danusha Laméris’ mother, Natasha, sent one of Danusha’s new poems (to be published soon in Bonfire Opera). With Danusha’s permission, here is her big poem:

Small Kindnesses

by Danusha Laméris

I’ve been thinking about the way, when you walk down a crowded aisle, people pull in their legs to let you by. Or how strangers still say “bless you” when someone sneezes, a leftover from the Bubonic plague. “Don’t die,” we are saying. And sometimes, when you spill lemons from your grocery bag, someone else will help you pick them up. Mostly, we don’t want to harm each other. We want to be handed our cup of coffee hot, and to say thank you to the person handing it. To smile at them and for them to smile back. For the waitress to call us honey when she sets down the bowl of clam chowder, and for the driver in the red pick-up truck to let us pass. We have so little of each other, now. So far from tribe and fire. Only these brief moments of exchange. What if they are the true dwelling of the holy, these fleeting temples we make together when we say, “Here, have my seat,” “Go ahead—you first,” “I like your hat.”
In early October RENEW’s Board of Directors, a high-powered group of savvy health professionals, met to discuss program opportunities, plans for the future, expanding the Board and finances. Board members approved the idea of augmenting RENEW’s reach via a convener development program.

The Board also agreed that, considering demographics, our increasing work with elders and their professional caregivers makes good sense. In addition, feedback from RENEW programs shows that other groups are also interested in “more”, as Dickens’ Oliver Twist would say. For example, women with young families feel pulled in many directions and wish to find focus and meaning via RENEW. We welcome your ideas! Email us at lindahclevermd@gmail.com or ccaufield.renew@gmail.com.