

## The Power of Words

One day while getting ready for school I was feeling confident. It was a Thursday, and I felt the combined excitement of the looming weekend and a volleyball game that afternoon. Although not a groundbreaking outfit, I tried to, periodically, stick out at school from the rest of the crowd in tiny ways. I put on a shirt I had thrifted the week before and my favorite pair of pants, embellishing the outfit with several pieces of jewelry. It was sure to turn heads. Right? I strutted into school feeling on top of the world, noticing glances from students on campus. I walked in and out of my first class with pep in my step, feeling bright and buoyant. That was until I got to one of my next classes, where I received a backhanded comment about my outfit from someone in my class. My heart immediately sank, and my cheeks went red. I felt idiotic for trying to delve out of my comfort zone, and for thinking anyone would like my outfit. I went the rest of the day distracted by my own appearance. The ridiculous jewelry felt heavy on my body, and the new shirt felt itchy and uncomfortable. By the end of the day, I was wishing I had brought a sweatshirt to offer some relief from the embarrassment I felt. It wasn't until I went to my volleyball game and changed into my uniform that I was able to shake the feeling of being watched and judged by others.

Even though the individual who made this comment may not have wished to cause harm, the words we say to others can have profound consequences. When we speak to people, we may not realize the great impact that our words hold, but our language can greatly affect individuals, whether it be a large statement or a seemingly insignificant comment. The words we use, no matter how infinitesimal they may seem on the surface, can ruin someone's day if we fail to consider certain criteria. Contemplating the level of honesty, fairness, goodwill, and benefit our words contain, we can be sure that before we speak, no one will be made the punchline of a joke.

No one will walk away from interactions feeling bad about themselves. With these principles, we can be sure to spread kindness in every direction — and have it be spread to us in turn.