

Today's Young People Are Incredible. Tell Them So.



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“What we know from the research is that being known and understood is one of the most tender and transformative experiences we can have, and that magic connection of relationship ends up helping both the kid and the grown-up at the same time.”

– Stephanie Malia Krauss

When I was young, I routinely asked my Dad, “We have Father’s Day and Mother’s Day. Why don’t we have a Kid’s Day?” His response was the same, every year: “Every day is Kid’s Day, Melanie!”

In 1997, Camp Fire began Absolutely Incredible Kid Day®, which falls on March 21 this year. It’s a national holiday to celebrate young people by writing and sending notes and letters to tell the kids we know that they’re incredible—and why. Camp Fire, a youth-serving nonprofit that was a wonderful part of my childhood, believes that words matter, and that encouragement and kindness from an adult can change a life.

Since my daughter Jessie’s childhood was not as long ago as my own, I asked for her thoughts about this holiday and the power of expressing your feelings to a child. My first question was “What’s the most supportive thing an adult can say to a kid?” Jessie responded, “Something that emphasizes unconditional acceptance: I am here for you no matter what.”

Not every child feels supported to be their true selves each and every day. And today’s kids face mental health challenges, bullying, and stress that eclipses what many of us experienced at a young age. Jessie couldn’t recall a specific memory of a kind, affirming note from an adult, but she told me that “Anytime a loved one reminded me of unconditional acceptance, I had more of a willingness to take risks and fail.” Jessie’s sentiment reminded me of an important value that permeates the culture in Camp Fire: “mistakes aren’t failures; they are an important part of how we grow.”

I recall Jessie telling me, when she was young, that her favorite color was yellow. She also taught her Mom about day-color synesthesia, a condition where you see or associate certain colors with specific days of the week. For Jessie, colors also evoke emotion and connection to fond memories. Her apartment, and my office, are both decorated with art featuring yellow as the dominant color. It’s a color that speaks happy to us. When I asked Jessie how she would tell a child they are incredible, she replied: “Your light is shining bright today!”

If you’re struggling to find the words to express how much you admire a young person in your life, the team at Camp Fire has wonderful tools and resources! Visit <https://campfire.org/kidday/> to check out writing tips, samples and examples.

Find Your Flame



My Mum writing a letter on AIKD in 2018.

Many of us joined the nonprofit sector after experiences that nurtured embers of empathy, compassion, and community service in our young lives. I hope you can recall the kindness of an adult who made you feel special, talented, and full of wonderful potential to change the world. Each day presents an opportunity for nonprofit sector veterans to help rising nonprofit leaders find and foster the same flame. Absolutely Incredible Kid Day® offers another chance to encourage emerging leaders to forge the paths that lead to their hopes and dreams—and to a better world.

Please take a few minutes from your day to write an encouraging note or letter to a kid in your life! During our conversation about AIKD this year, my amazing, talented and resilient daughter Jessie reminded me that “Words of kindness and encouragement can change someone’s day, or someone’s life!”

Melanie Lockwood Herman is Executive Director of the Nonprofit Risk Management Center. She welcomes your stories about the lessons you are learning from the incredible kids in your life at Melanie@nonprofitrisk.org and 703-777.3504.