



## Acts of Kindness

### Happy Birthday

This is a first for me — I've never written an Acts of Kindness blog on my birthday! So, here goes.

As I move through my fifties, the significance of birthdays and celebrations feels a little different. There's a growing awareness of how quickly time is passing, a feeling I don't recall from when I eagerly counted down the sleeps to my 10th birthday party. That was the first time I could invite my closest neighbours, friends from primary school, church, and my cricket team to our home to play cricket on the street. What a great party that was!

However, as I sit here and write, my heart is full — full from a collection of short texts, voice messages, phone calls, and personal greetings. I am actually in Hong Kong on a significant work trip, presenting at the 21st Century Learning Conference for educators and collaborating with 19 different local schools. My immediate family celebrated my birthday the day before I left, with thoughtful cards and messages, making sure I felt loved and appreciated.

Two things stand out to me as I reflect on this birthday.

Firstly, the power of small acts of kindness. Many people in my life reached out in some small way to say hi, wish me well, and send their best wishes. And this truly mattered. Each message, no matter how brief, felt like an act of kindness. Interestingly, my rough estimate is that the time taken to send these messages ranged from 5 seconds to 5 minutes, with an average of under a minute! Yet in those few seconds, many people made a difference — not just to my day, but to my year ahead — reminding me that they are there for me.

This awareness has deepened my commitment to acknowledging others on their special days, even in small, authentic ways. My wife, Jeanette, is incredibly thoughtful about this, always remembering birthdays and reaching out with warmth and sincerity. I plan to continue learning from her example and passing it forward.

Secondly, the beauty of technology in enabling and strengthening connection. Just yesterday, I attended a workshop at the conference titled *Re-booting Your Relationship with Your Phone*. The session began with an interesting question: *What is an app on your phone that helps you be the person you want to be?* While the discussion later delved into notification counts and app rankings, it started by recognising the positive side of our devices.

Reflecting on my birthday, I'm reminded by how technology — WhatsApp, FaceTime, text messages — enables connection. These simple tools allow people to reach out effortlessly, reinforcing how technology can serve as a bridge to meaningful relationships. That workshop question stayed with me. What's an app on your phone that helps you be the person you want to be? For me, it's my Wim Hof breathing app. My partner beside me mentioned their *Forest* app,



which helps them stay focused by growing virtual trees. I know Jeanette would say her birthday reminder app!

I've enjoyed writing this birthday blog about acts of kindness. Taking time to reflect on how people acknowledge and support one another has not only filled me with gratitude but also strengthened my resolve to be more intentional in my own actions. So, here's to small gestures, meaningful connections, and the kindness we can all share.

Happy birthday — whether it's today or in the future!

P.S. If any of our *My Manifesto* mates want to share their birthday date with us, know that we would be delighted to send you a warm greeting on your special day!