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The Importance of Being Charming

If you have charm, you don't need anything else, and if you don't have it, it doesn't much matter what else you have.

James Barrie
playwright

CHARM: those personal qualities and actions that stem from a genuine acceptance and love of self overflowing into loving others and enjoying life and that create the fun and affection making you delightful and irresistibly attractive to others. (1)

As have many others, I have always wondered about people who are genuinely charming*. They seem intriguing, so easy to like and wonderful to be with. Without effort, they magnetically draw us to them immediately as their looks, touches, and words reach out and welcome us. Their good cheer, kind wit, and gentle caring entice and envelop us in warmth and laughter. Succumbing with a smile, we are captivated by the charming, enchanted by what charm does to us. Something deep within us makes all of us vulnerable to the goodwill radiating from them. It captures us much as love does, returning us again to the happiness we had first in the wombs and arms of our mothers. (2).

Just as love enhances the loved, we are changed by charm's embrace. We feel warm and wonderful... and special; and we look it. Our faces soften and we grow younger. We sparkle and dance. We laugh and play ... and love more openly. Under the spell of the charming, we blossom into the persons we want to be and ought to be--- happy, excited, and loving ourselves and others. The charming see the best within us and our best qualities come out. Charm works by making the charmed more charming. No wonder we enjoy so much being with these special people. How do they do it? (3)

They romance the world and the world loves them back. Confident of being well received, the charming woo us by offering the pleasure of their company and ask of us only the pleasure of our company: good times together and friendly relationships. Through their personalities, these irresistible people create a world of affection and laughter and they invite us in. By both subtle and obvious ways, they charm themselves into our lives. Joining them, we bond through good times. We show our best with them as we enjoy them and earn their good will. Their impact is always positive and often unforgettable and they live on in our hearts and minds. By their example and influence, they show us how we could live our lives and how we should treat others. Who has not yearned to return to the pleasure of their company? Who has not wanted to be like them?

Except to those who misunderstand personal charm as superficial or manipulative, the word evokes in many of us happy memories of being with such people. I recall a darling girl in early high school in Oregon, long forgotten by name but never by impression. She laughed easily and heartily...and good-naturedly. Attentive and kind to everyone, she always had nice upbeat things to say. Her smile invited attention and captured everyone's affection. Another such person was a college fraternity brother, Johnny Putman, who always amazed me with his magnetic personality and many talents. Everyone who knew him, both men and women, loved him. Part of the inspiration for this study, Johnny is later described at length.

*Being charming is a matter of degree. People range in likability from normal/average to personable/engaging up to charming. I would estimate that two or three out of a hundred people are personable or engaging but only one out of a thousand is charming. There is a small number of manipulative people who can be charming for the moment when they want something. Just as we don't call a person honest because he tells the truth occasionally, we don't call someone charming because he can be so occasionally. Being charming is a way of living, not an interpersonal tactic. (3b)

This self-acceptance contrasts sharply with the inflated claims of self-love and personal worth by the narcissistic braggadocio who is futilely attempting to avoid and cover up his actual low self-esteem.

I have met a small number of charming persons in my life just as you probably have. Since charm benefits the charming as well as the charmed, they are quite successful in their social lives. Their popularity often propels them into positions of influence and leadership. In high school, they are the best-liked students, the ones elected president of clubs, classes, or the student body or voted “Wittiest”, “Friendliest”, or “Most Popular”. Sometimes they may just be good ol’ boys or girls whom everyone likes. Whether they are physically beautiful or not, the girls are often elected cheerleaders, homecoming queens, or beauty queens. Their charming ways make them appear beautiful. In college, the charming again become the presidents of clubs, classes, or the student body. Often they become the presidents, rush chairpersons, and social chairpersons of fraternities and sororities. The women are frequently college beauty queens and the sweethearts and little sisters of fraternities.

Being charming makes becoming successful in all areas of life much easier. In adult life, the charming are usually quite successful in their occupational pursuits. Depending on their ambition, they become successful salespersons, managers, executives, and professionals. Since almost everything in business is done with and through people, charm has a pervasive influence in business interactions. When others enjoy being with you, they want to hire you and enjoy working with and for you. In life as well as business, personality is destiny.

While some successful executives gain influence and position by assertiveness, ambition, and ability, the best lead with healthy amounts of charm. William Battalia, chairman of the prestigious executive search firm Battalia and Associates, stated that personal charm in a CEO candidate impresses a corporate board of directors and leaves them awestruck. It often determines whether the candidate gets the job offer. Wall Street Journal and Fortune frequently have articles discussing executives whose charming personalities assisted in their successes. There is at least one major company, Southwest Airlines, built around the charming personalities of its CEO and his top vice-president, Herb Kelleher and Colleen Barrett. (4)

How much people like each other significantly influences how effectively they work together. While especially significant in sales, customer relations, and business development at all levels of a corporation, personal charm affects all business activities ranging from brief telephone conversations to extended work relationships. People prefer to work and do business with those whom they like and trust. It is fascinating to watch an engaging salesperson quickly establish rapport or an accomplished administrative assistant astutely handle a difficult problem with someone. I have seen receptionists make visitors fall in love with their companies and executives lure talented managers to their divisions. (4b)

Although they may be professionally competent, many salespersons, managers and executives function poorly at work and get fired. They do not know how to get along well with others. While it takes more than charm to be successful in business, personal charm, when added to other qualities such as industriousness, ambition, competence, and character, makes success easy to achieve and to maintain. Personal charm helps you advance as far as your talents can take you ...and often even further. Charm fused with ambition and leadership creates charisma, but charm without character and competence can lead to harm and failure. (5)

Charm: a way of getting the answer yes without having asked any clear question.
Albert Camus, 1956

Charming people relate extraordinarily well to a broad range of people and many flock to be around them. Their pleasing ways cause others to immensely enjoy being with them in every setting from business to romance. Everything works better when people like and enjoy each other and charm helps people mix well together. Personal charm is a spice that makes interacting tastier...and more enjoyable for all concerned. Like lagniappe, it adds a little something extra that makes every encounter more pleasant. It keeps others coming back.

Thinking about these people was so pleasant that I found myself asking, as psychologists are wont to do, why is it so enjoyable to be with them? What are they really like? Why do others like them so quickly? Wouldn't it be great to be charming? My pleasant reverie into charm inspired a number of interesting and perplexing questions.

Everything has been figured out except how to live.
J.P. Sartre

I thought that it might be fun to study charm and interesting to find the answers to these questions and the many others that later arose. Challenging to discover the secrets of liking, popularity, and perhaps love and exciting to find out how to become charming. As I began to think further about charm, I realized that the answers could be more than just fun and interesting; they could also be important. The charming may have valuable lessons to teach us about how to treat others in ways that are morally right as well as pragmatically beneficial to all concerned. Since it takes so little effort and costs nothing, we should all aspire to be good companions to our fellow man for it benefits us and them in so many ways. How charming you are, or aren't, seems to affect almost every aspect of your life. The charming seem to be able to easily get the jobs, friends, and love that they want. They may have the answers to some of our most important personal concerns.

Ordinary people: living without charm

To live is the rarest thing in the world. Most people exist, that is all.
Oscar Wilde

The most fundamental motivation in humans' lives is the search for enduring positive relationships with their fellow man. Most people's activities and satisfactions are concerned with being recognized and praised, being approved and accepted into groups, being a friend, and loving their children, spouses, friends and relatives. The charming, who range from being slightly shy to extremely outgoing, enjoy an excess of these pleasures. But many ordinary people seem to lack much of these satisfactions. Many interactions between people seem flat and scripted when fun and warmth could be added by a softer tone, the right word, a twinkling smile, or more heart-felt regard. Adding that little extra would make any ordinary experience extraordinary and brighten both persons' days. One sees far too little genuine cheerfulness, playfulness, sincere interest and concern, warmth, and supportiveness in many relationships, including our more extended and intimate ones. A dollop of charm could easily be added and spark a positive upturn in a relationship. Yet it seems that most people either don't know how to do so or don't care or dare to add that spark. It takes little to get back a lot from others but most don't offer even a little. (6)

Most people believe that they are friendlier and nicer to others than they actually are. If they were as good as they think they are, they would have large numbers of friends. But they don't. They are often unaware of how inhibited they are in sharing their friendliness and caring, however much they may feel it within. In most social situations, one sees a safe superficial sociability, a façade of charm with no sincere welcoming of others. This common social style entails a pleasant demeanor, politeness, brief attempts at humor, and repeated efforts to talk about trivial matters that don't matter to anyone. There is no sharing of what they feel nor is there any interest in each other. Nobody talks about what matters and nobody cares because nobody listens anyway. The interactions are boring, forgettable, and without impact. As a perceptive charmer in this study said to me, most people don't talk and they don't listen. Not knowing how to make interacting fun, interesting, or meaningful, they don't really interact with others because they don't anticipate enough desirable consequences in doing so. Our relationships wither because of the withholding of warmth and playfulness. (7)

Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do.
Jesus

Also people don't notice how frequently their seemingly innocuous words and actions have distancing effects on others. They are often blind to how they fail to be even passably nice to others including colleagues, friends, dates, children, and spouses. Since many individuals have histories of being treated poorly by parents and peers, it takes very little to make them feel unappreciated and unwelcome and to terminally injure a potential or existing relationship. After having been hurt by the accidental thoughtlessness of others, many people become angry in order to not care any longer. Rather than understanding and forgiving others' clumsiness and limitations that they too share in abundance, most give

up rather than patch up the relationships. The promise of many relationships fades quickly as people stumble and fumble with each other. (8)

Too many people appear to walk their all-too-short path through life with few close bonds to others. Unable to find others with whom they can be happy, they seem to emotionally and physically isolate themselves and endure dissatisfied lonely lives without close friends or loving spouses. When they meet someone, they don't know how to attract and keep these potential partners. They are unable to make their encounters enjoyable enough for others or even for themselves. Not knowing how to be a good friend, they don't form bonds strong enough to keep relationships alive. So, few viable relationships are born from the large number of people they meet socially. Too many of us have had too many unrealized relationships, too many lost friendships, and too much lost love. There has been for some time in America a serious decline in positive bonds and associations between people that has resulted in a marked increase in people's unhappiness. (9)

Many people, particularly men, have become accustomed to having few, if any, close friends. They even block and deny the desire for them. Yet very few would turn away the friendship of someone who treated them well. I have been in gyms numerous times with over fifty men lifting weights and almost none of them ever talked to anyone between the exercise sets. How different is that from being in a room with fifty profoundly disturbed autistic children roaming around and never looking at or speaking to another child?

Having been somewhat ignored, criticized, and rejected at home, school, and playground, most people are like buds of flowers that never got enough sunshine, warmth, and nourishment to blossom into loving and playful persons. We all learn how to relate to others out of the matrix of our early relationships with our families and peers. Unfortunately these experiences were often of limited benefit in what they taught us. Too often our childhoods were hurtful and quite restricting to our personalities. We seldom learned how to be really affectionate or to have a lot of fun with our parents. Or how to be genuinely caring with our peers. Beyond hearing a few limited guidelines, most people never learn how to have a good time with others. Consequently, few of us know how to attract and to please others or how to develop mutually satisfying relationships. It would help all of us to ask ourselves why others like us. What is really enjoyable about being with us?

In their efforts to attract others, many women focus on and obsess about their physical beauty. Affected by television, magazines, and countless advertisements extolling beauty, many women, and increasingly men, show excessive concern and unwarranted discontent with their appearances. Women worry about fingernails and mascara, hairstyle and jewelry, and an inch of fat when they don't even know how to make someone happier. Not knowing what would make themselves happy, many men look for shapely breasts when a loving heart and a good sense of humor would bring them much more happiness. For some, the curves of the body are more important than whether the person would be a real friend or ally in life to them. If they became smarter psychologically, they would look for personality and character rather than staring at shapes.

To marry a woman for her beauty is like buying a house for its paint.
Unknown author

Numerous beauty salons, jewelry and clothing stores, nail care centers, diet centers, cosmetics companies, exercise facilities, prestige car dealers, and plastic surgeons enjoy brisk businesses catering to those wishing to make themselves externally attractive to others. At these places, many people expend exorbitant amounts of energy, pain, money, thought, and time when they should focus their efforts elsewhere. At enormous costs, they purchase momentary attention from others to their superficial appearances while they totally neglect making themselves more attractive from within. (10)

Making efforts to improve themselves is admirable but their directions are too often misguided. Neither an extra inch on their chests nor an inch off their waists is likely to bring them true love or happiness. Their physiques flourish while their psyches wither through inattention. They work hard to look beautiful when they need to act beautifully. They become physically attractive but empty shells with little sincere warmth or depth of character. It seems, to me, a very strange conceit to think that another person is going to find much satisfaction by merely looking at your beautiful face or body for the duration of your relationship. How enjoyable is someone's beauty if the person doesn't treat you well?

Physical beauty is most important to those superficial persons who are unable to enjoy anything else. Equally unfortunate, there are persons whose only beauty they will ever show lies in their physical appearances. But beauty without charm is a cruelly deceptive promise to others. Those who have dated the beautiful know how briefly it pleases and how quickly it fades. Even the most beautiful look less than attractive when they show traits all too common to many humans: being shallow, aloof, insensitive, petty, exploitative, inconsiderate, materialistic, pretentious, self-centered, indifferent, critical, unresponsive, hypocritical, defensive, emotionally deadened, etc. Unfortunately there are too many men and women who lose their physical attractiveness as you get to know them.

Since most people have personalities that are quite ordinary, perhaps they think that the sole way they can compete and stand out in dating and romance is through physical appearance. However, if they developed their personalities, they wouldn't have any difficulty with the competition in dating. The most powerful competitive advantage in life a person could develop is becoming charming. There are many physically attractive competitors and very few charming ones.

Look around a restaurant or any public event and ask yourself how physically attractive are the various people and what makes them appear so. I think that you will find that what you assume about their personalities markedly affects how attractive you find them. Many people are potentially physically attractive enough but their habitual moods and gestures detract from their appeal. They need to improve their personalities by developing a warm fun-filled personality.

Few understand the power of the inner beauty they could develop and the significant improvement in their physical attractiveness that would result. Women I've known who seemed the most beautiful were rarely the most physically attractive in a structural sense. Their engaging personalities made them delightful to be with and consequently made them seem to be very physically attractive. Also, I have seen lively elderly ladies and gentlemen who were quite attractive despite their advanced ages. A little charm would make most people appear far more physically attractive than they could imagine.

Enhancing the pleasure of your company

Personal charm is obviously important in pleasing and attracting others to us. Perhaps less apparent is the crucial role it plays in making the interaction enjoyable for both persons. While charm allows you to sparkle and dazzle, being charming is essentially about helping others to sparkle and dazzle too. The charming make others enjoyable to be with.

The core of personal charm lies in the charmers' habit of searching for, bringing out, and enjoying whatever positive potential there is with every person and situation. They look for what is good and enjoyable rather than what is wrong, lacking, or threatening. Like the lover, the charming enjoy what there is and ignore what is missing. With them, you are safe to be yourself and are appreciated for whom you are without having to apologize for what you aren't. You are just fine just the way you are. Every person and situation is enjoyed for whatever pleasures it offers.

Whether we recognize it or not, we all often cause how others respond to us; we create our interpersonal worlds. How much you like and enjoy another often depends on how skillfully you draw out the person's best qualities. A management consultant told me how he was very rudely treated in a corporate meeting by a high level employee. After a few episodes of smoozing the employee, he and the employee became close friends and have remained so for over thirty years. By his considerable charm, he created a life long friend out of a difficult beginning.

The charming adeptly elicit and enjoy whatever potential there is in any encounter, whether brief and limited or more enduring and intimate. Personal charm brings out others' warmth and fun-loving ways so that both of you can enjoy being together. The truly charming can make almost anyone enjoyable to be with because almost everyone has an engaging personality that comes out under the right conditions. When you make people feel safe and valued, their personalities will unfold into good will and good times before you. This ability allows the charming to develop and enjoy a very large number of friendly acquaintances and close friends that ordinary persons lack. Whether with one or many, the charming create for everyone a friendly fun-filled world in which everyone shines. They charm you in order to enjoy you. (11)

When people don't relate well to others, they lose many opportunities for more happiness in their lives. I have seen countless situations in which lives have been seriously diminished due to the lack of charm. During high school and college, we have the best opportunity we will probably ever have to make friends and find love. We are surrounded by numerous persons with whom we have a fair amount in common. Yet many students lack the personality and motivation to attract acquaintances, to form friendships, and to find love. Most students ignore or reject those who are different and make friends only within narrow cliques or Greek organizations. While some group members may claim their exclusiveness as a positive quality, the more insightful recognize their insecurity about being accepted and the lack of a strong sense of self-worth that motivate their fearful selectivity. Almost all students miss out on the enjoyment and other rewards they would gain if they made more friends from the numerous students around them daily. In contrast, the charming make friends everywhere they go by treating strangers better than most people treat their friends.

Friendships and dating relationships often wither and die quiet deaths as one person leaves to pursue someone else more engaging. Marriages dissolve when a spouse leaves because of being treated in a less than sensitive and loving manner. Our children too are frequently treated in less than wonderful ways and it shows in their personalities. Many parents don't enjoy their children and the children don't enjoy their parents. How often does a child with a loving relationship with his parents go bad? How often does someone reject a charming acquaintance, date, friend, or spouse?

Watch married couples interact in restaurants, parties, and theatres. How excited is their talk? Do they laugh easily? How affectionate is their touch? Do they really enjoy being together? While some seem cordial enough and a few happy, most seem distant and disconnected. Too often, their interactions seem to range from distant to antagonistic. I have often thought that too many people stay in bad marriages because they are accustomed to poor or indifferent treatment throughout their lives. It is all they have ever known and all they ever expect and hope for. It is also why they are so vulnerable to affairs with persons who treat them better.

Life is a very sad piece of buffoonery because we have the need to fool ourselves continuously by the spontaneous creation of a reality... which from time to time reveals itself to be vain and illusory.

Luigi Pirandello
Autobiographical Sketch in La Lettere, Rome

Some research studies may paint a prettier picture of marital life because most people lie to themselves and to researchers. They don't want to admit to themselves or others what their lives are really like. How can you admit that the person who claims to love you the most in life treats you so badly? Many persons will claim that their marriages are satisfying even when they feel misunderstood, unappreciated, and disrespected by their spouses! How easy is it to acknowledge that you have committed your life to someone who now makes you unhappy? How many couples do you know well who are genuinely happy and in love with each other beyond the early infatuation? The answer probably isn't pretty. Over the years when I have asked sensitive and sophisticated friends if they know any marriages that are really happy, they answered that there are very few out of the hundreds they know.

Marital conflict and the high divorce rate (over 50% of new marriages) in our country are seriously harming many people. In particular, the children are being damaged permanently. Yet dissatisfied spouses can not and should not be forced to stay together when they are treated poorly and don't know how to enjoy being with each other. How many of these marriages and families could be saved if the spouses learned how to be charming to each other? (12)

The social infrastructure of our society is deteriorating due to many causes but the dearth of stable positive relationships in our lives is a central cause. Civility, the mildest form of caring and respect of others, is becoming rarer in our society. Even intelligent individuals such as psychologists and psychoanalysts who ought to be sensitive and empathic toward others are rude and discourteous toward their colleagues. Incivility seems rampant in the workplace toward fellow co-workers as well as customers. It appears that many in our society need to learn simple consideration and introductory etiquette. (13)

Many adults are increasingly unhappy and isolated from others. Unable to find friendship and love from humans, many seek affection from their pets. They find it easier and safer to lavish love on dogs and cats rather than spouses, children, and friends. They treat their animals with more affection than they treat

people. And, of course, their pets are more affectionate and playful with them than their spouses, friends, and children are. While being truly loved can buffer us from the ever-present stresses of life, the most unconditional love many experience comes from their dogs! The old joke that if you want a friend in Washington, DC then buy a dog seems increasingly true across America.

Our youths are surrounded daily by numerous peers with whom they could have good times and form good relationships. Yet too many of our youths experience bullying, rejection, alienation, and drug usage during high school, isolation and excessive drinking of alcohol in college, and suicide during both periods. Unskilled in dealing with others, they keep their distance or perhaps associate with a very few others. Not knowing how to have a good time or how to cultivate a good relationship, many students and young adults get high or drunk to numb the hurt and loneliness of their lives and to create the only good feelings they have each day. Not having a confidant, they rely on a chemical. Unable to make a friend, they make a joint. Rather than finding pleasure in wit, friendship, and adventure, they find thrills in breaking the drug laws and getting unspeakably stupid through intoxicating substances. For moments they are able to escape their emotionally bleak lives. No wonder their suicide rates are so high. They haven't yet learned how to live well; they don't know how to bring about and enjoy the good times available with others. In contrast, the charming live well and have a good time doing it. (14)

Almost all of us have experienced significant hurts and losses in our lives due to the lack of charm. We have all seen the glances that turned away and the smiles that quickly faded. There were overtures that weren't responded to. Some invitations weren't accepted and some were never reciprocated. Some of us didn't get invited to parties or to join clubs or Greek social organizations in college. Others didn't get elected to offices. A few were rarely asked out on dates; most were asked but couldn't sustain the relationships. Some friendships became deeper and more satisfying but most faded. Sometimes love lived for moments but all too often it withered and died. Many married for a period and others never married. At work, some succeeded but most plateaued and some failed. Most of us can recall a situation or two in which we lost the opportunity for advancement, friendship, or love because we didn't treat some others well enough. Few of us will ever realize that we have all lost countless opportunities. However almost all of us do know that we have experienced some crushing wounds to our personages and lives for want of a little charm. Who has not been scarred? And who has witnessed these hurts to others without being moved? (15)

Two memories have always particularly saddened me. While in high school in Oregon, I once saw a shabbily dressed older man slowly climb to his seat among a happy youthful crowd watching a football game. Looking self-conscious and unwanted, he seemed to be extremely lonely and dejected, particularly so because of the contrast with the boisterous crowd's mood. It seemed like he had been alone his whole life and would be for eternity. I felt an overwhelming sadness for him and nothing has ever seemed as sad to me as his empty life and what it might have been. Due to my youth, I didn't know how to help him.

Years ago in a restaurant in Atlanta, a girlfriend and I discreetly watched a teenager and his date seated at a table. With tense faces, they looked around the room nervously to avoid looking at each other. Not knowing how to talk with each other, they said less than ten words to each other in thirty minutes. Although I was upset by their inability to reach out to each other, I was unable to find some socially proper means of stimulating a conversation between them.

I have never forgotten these people and there are many others much sadder. There is considerable unhappiness in many people that is known only to closest intimates, psychotherapists, medical doctors and the ambulance drivers who pick up suicide victims. As the song states, for many, life goes on long after the thrill in living is gone. There is so much unhappiness in so many lives that you would think that it "would break the heart of God". I hope that this book is helpful to the young couple and that lonely man wherever they are but it was written for all of us who might enrich our lives by it. The charming people featured in this book have graciously shared their hearts and lives in this book and elsewhere in order to benefit all of us.

Full many a flower is born to blush unseen
and waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Thomas Gray

Whether remembered or not, each of us decided long ago how we would live among our fellow man. For almost all of us, life starts with a love affair with our little worlds as we are cared for and comforted by the soft warm womb and loving arms of our mothers. But for some, it quickly deteriorates from there. Some were affected even before birth by their interactions with their twins. They came out of birth with personalities already bent in directions which later interactions would strengthen or perhaps nullify. Some autistic babies were hurt and shocked so profoundly by the abrupt transition from the ever-pleasing womb that they retreated into a solitary world within themselves. They chose to not care and to not seek loving contact with humans. They spend their lives in distraction in order to avoid experiencing wanting another. Other autistic infants learned a little later in life to leave the world that offered insufficient pleasures to them and they sought to go within themselves for comfort.

Some babies not given loving touch or caring withered and died in infancy. Other infants became schizoid, sociopathic, and schizophrenic from being hurt early in life and deciding to keep away from people in order to protect themselves from further harm. Still others were hurt later and less painfully. Mad at the world because it did not provide them with what they wanted and not knowing how to do better, they chose to be angry, anxious, or sad. Rather than enjoying what there is or trying to make things better, they chose defiance, isolation, and depression. (16)

Most people, though perhaps not hurt early or profoundly, nevertheless succumbed to the life-long accumulation of stress, indifference, and rejection inflicted on them by parents, relatives, peers, and authority figures. In their efforts to protect, mold, and teach us, they often tried to do so with various hurtful means. No doubt believing that they were trying to help us, these people whipped us with their indifference, criticism, verbal abuse, and bodily assault. While some children took the blows and responded with a smile and a determined heart, many slowly gave up their ability to show warmth, laughter, and adventure. By adulthood, they allowed their negative experiences with others to overwhelm their positive ones and they lost their smiles. They deadened themselves to the world and narrowed their concerns to their small personal spaces. While polite and civil in behavior, these normal people became largely indifferent to enjoying others and caring about others. This indifference tells the stranger and the acquaintance that they don't really matter, that they are of little or no importance. This indifference always keeps others strangers and too often it makes them enemies. These ordinary people may have acquaintances but they essentially remain emotionally alone outside of work and family, and too often even then. Too many people are dead emotionally while still alive physically. The dearth of fun and friends caused their too early emotional deaths. (17)

A small number of people were given affection, attention, and material goods by generous parents and relatives. They were taught to feel entitled without having to earn and to be self-centered without a sense of mutuality, reciprocity, and attention to others' feelings and plights. They didn't learn that in this world liking, love, and gifts are earned by love, character, and contribution. While most people got so little in early life and can now only focus on getting, the spoiled got so much that they too can now only focus on getting. Both groups think that the world owes them a loving; neither group learned to get and give in loving reciprocity. (18)

However there are those who decided to be good to their fellow humans and their lives reflect that decision. They have kept themselves alive by smiling and laughing and loving. Finding that they always benefit from a friend, rarely from a stranger, and never from an enemy, they chose to make friends in life. They knew that every interaction provides the opportunity to make a friend or an enemy and they chose to make friends in life. They are the personable and charming people who make the world a lot nicer.

The charming featured in this book decided to treat others very well and to share their fun with others. Along the paths of their lives, and certainly at their ends, they will leave a long-remembered legacy of shared laughter and love. They will have touched the lives of many, sometimes momentarily but more often for a considerable period, and will leave behind many who relished and benefited from their times

together. The charming will be remembered with smiles, appreciation, and love. They made the right decision. While it is hard at times to show charm toward difficult persons and under trying circumstances, the charming largely live out that earlier decision. As such, the charming show the rest of us a better way of living. Without being “do-gooders”, they show us how to do good while living well.

For all of the difficulties and deficiencies that affect ordinary people, there still beats within almost all of us most of the same needs, feelings, and reactions that characterize the charming. These qualities need only to be brought out by being facilitated in good company or by the willful decisions of the individual.

Deciding to become charming

All of us have created legacies along our life paths that stem from our earlier decisions. However, decisions can be changed and you can decide how positive the remainder of your legacy will be. While few of us will leave behind significant achievements or wealth, all of us can easily leave a trail of benevolence and good times with others. Becoming charming starts with an easy smile, an open heart, and a small act. Whether with strangers or loved ones, we can easily take the path of habitually offering warmth and laughter to others and ultimately leave in our paths numerous friendly acquaintances, a bunch of friends and loved ones, and a better world. We can all perform “random acts of kindness”. Or we can live badly, die as empty souls with little fun, few friends and less love, and be quickly forgotten. The choice is ours (and yours).

To help to understand your legacy so far, you should try to imagine who would show up at your funeral. Ask how many would feel a deep loss at your death and why. How many people have you deeply affected in a positive way by your companionship? How much have you enjoyed your life so far? How much have you laughed and loved? Hopefully there will be both great sadness at your death and great joy at your having lived because you did good deeds and had great times.

Most of us will leave little beyond our direct impacts on others and yet these impacts can be incredibly important. Good deeds and good times always make life easier and sometimes they are life transforming. They take little thought and almost no effort. Humor at the right moment, a smile to a stranger or friend, a laugh together, or a shared adventure can brighten a day and prompt a positive change for a moment or for a lifetime. These good deeds spring spontaneously and effortlessly from the hearts of the charming.

All of us can become everyday angels who enjoy doing good. It takes little caring and encouragement to help many others. As a psychotherapist, I have seen off-hand remarks that have profound effects years later. Even incidental expressions of caring have kept people alive through periods of adversity. Most of us can recall memorable incidents in which we were significantly benefited when others assisted us in some small but important way or provided us with unexpected fun, affection, or kindness. Warmth shown to a neglected child can help her endure the unhappiness and motivate her success. The love and laughter of a grandparent can ease a child’s unhappy home life, and the caring shown by a coach or a buddy’s father can save a boy’s life. You can choose to become one of the good guys in life.

All of us can become little heroes because small acts can be momentous to others’ lives. A small kindness and an offering of a piece of bread have revived Nazi concentration camp inmates from near-death despair. A shared joke can remind a depressed person that he can laugh again and that happiness may be possible too. Setting up a friend with a blind date can result in a happy marriage and life together. Calling a lonely friend will make his day. A close friendship can prevent a man who has lost his job or spouse from killing himself. Inviting a shy girl into a sorority will improve her self-esteem, provide her with many new friends, and expand her social life. Being kind to your former girl friend or spouse can help her through the difficult process of starting her life over again. Listening to a hurt angry person will diminish the anger and offer a better perspective on the problem.

We can help people renew their lives by our caring and laughing with them. Since you never know the effects beforehand, you should spread good and enjoyment through your days. The lives you benefit may be others’, but the life you enjoy will be yours. You can fill your legacy with fun and good will and it will shine and endure long after you are gone. Good acts are done by many people, not just the charming. However, the charming do them continuously as they walk through their lives. The charming spread good

directly by their impacts on others but they also multiply that impact by inspiring and teaching the others to treat people well.

I teach you the over-man. Man is something to be surpassed.

Friedrich Nietzsche

While the study of charm may be enjoyable and interesting, in final measure it is much more than that. It is important because it can be of enormous benefit to those of us who could lead much happier lives and to those whom we touch in our lives. Charm promises much but it can deliver even more. Charm makes almost everything in life easier but it will not provide the answer to all of life's problems. Life is not all perfect for the charming; painful things like poor marital choices, job and financial stresses, sickness, and difficulties with children also happen to them. The charming also have to contend with the hateful envy from some of the less personable who resent their popularity and happiness.

However charm can buffer and solve many problems. Perhaps in understanding the secrets of charming ways, we could find a cure for the ills of loneliness, broken relationships, marital discord, failure, and unhappiness. Maybe in this book we could draw a map for becoming happy and loving, popular and successful. We might create a way of living that would make the world nicer and more joyful for many of us.

The hope for happiness in life will not be fulfilled by buying things, professional recognition, financial success, or progress in our society. Recall the numerous celebrities who after having earned considerable accomplishment, recognition, and material riches killed themselves. Secular causes and political policies improve your world far too slowly. The hope will be fulfilled by your enjoying numerous pleasures in your daily life and in loving yourself and your fellow humans. Your world will improve one laugh, one interaction, and one relationship at a time as you add more charm to your daily life. Whether you want to be successful at work, to be liked, loved, and popular, to have good times and enjoy your life, to benefit many others, or to leave the legacy of a good life, becoming charming is the most important step toward accomplishing your dreams. It will surround you with a world of enjoyable and loving relationships and provide you with a direct path to the greatest happiness possible on earth. (19)

Charming people appeared to be too much fun, too fascinating, and too important to neglect. So I decided to study the ways of charming people, the art of making people feel wonderful about themselves...and you.

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