

Karen Strassman

actress and voiceover artist

*"Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a battle you know nothing about"*

Kindness. Compassion. Creativity. These are all aspects that I try to incorporate into my daily life as I navigate our ever-changing world. As a child growing up in Washington D.C., I was drawn to anything that allowed my creative side to shine: drawing, making ceramic pieces, performing in every school play I could find. After high school, I struck a balance between pursuing a practical career and feeding my creativity when I chose to study psychology and theatre at Tufts University. During my junior year, I accepted an opportunity to study abroad in France, a decision that would change the course of my life, and my career, forever. While there, I answered an ad for a company looking for a dialect coach intern to help French actors learn to speak with an American accent for their TV and film roles. Soon, they offered me a full-time position and I also started working in voiceover as well as French TV and film projects. Putting the practicality of a career in psychology aside, I began exploring all the opportunities my creative side could offer. I haven't looked back since and I continue to find new joy in the life I have built everyday. I want to share a few of the ways I've found to enrich my life and I hope they provide as much inspiration to you as they have to me.

**Broaden Your Horizons:** Many times we'll get stuck in the monotony of a routine because it is easy, or safe, or because it doesn't require much thought after doing it for so long. I encourage people to get out of that mindset and step out of their comfort zone. I think anyone who has the opportunity to travel should do it. Traveling to other places and countries really opened my perspective on the world as a child. When I moved to France at 19 years old, it changed my life. I went knowing very little French, and had to muddle through daily life with just the basics...it was humbling and beautiful in a way. I took classes in theatre, learning Moliere and Racine, and French poetry, which was so musical and beautiful, even if the meaning often escaped me. I was studying university level psychology, barely understanding the half of it. When you are immersed like that, you are forced to learn fast. When you live in a foreign country, it inevitably calls upon you to be so present in every moment of daily life, because everything is new, different, and interesting. You become fascinated with the newness of everything like a child all over again. If traveling isn't an option for you, find something that nourishes your soul: take a class, rekindle a long-lost hobby, or discover a new one. There is so much around us to explore and be compelled by.



**Radiate Kindness:** Like the byline of this article says, I always try my best to be kind to those around me. To be perfectly honest, sometimes I fail miserably. Still, I recognize that we are all wounded. We are all imperfectly human, just trying our best to get through each day. A simple smile or encouraging word can go a long way in empowering someone. When I was working on *Preacher*, on my second day I got a note from Julie Ann Emery, who I have never met, and didn't even have any scenes with, welcoming me to set. She mentioned she had seen the dailies and that my work looked great. Now think about this. She had absolutely nothing to gain from doing that. Nothing to get out of this interaction personally. This cool chick reached out to another chick on her set just to make her feel welcomed, empowered, and great. I think that is what empowerment is all about: in everyday moments, choosing to empower another person even if you have nothing personal to gain from it. I think empowering other human beings is something that grows and spreads through small acts, and it can be even more powerful than an extravagant, grand gesture. I try to live by that philosophy, to live by that example.

**Lend A Helping Hand:** One of the things that brings me the most joy is giving back to my community. Anytime I can focus on something other than myself and my own petty problems, and give something to someone with more significant needs, it creates a sense of relief in my being. I tend to breathe a little deeper and be a little more present when I know I've done something good for someone. It puts a lot of things into perspective. My absolute favorite cause to support is Covenant House California, a non-profit youth homeless shelter that provides sanctuary and support for homeless and trafficked youthages 18-24. I connect deeply with their belief that no young person deserves to be homeless but they do deserve to be loved. I also support other organizations like CARE, Partners in Health, and PETA.

I offer these suggestions to you in hopes that it will cause you to dig deep and find what brings you true joy. It is just waiting to be discovered.

**Karen Strassman** is an accomplished actress with hundreds of film, television, and voiceover credits to her name. She was most recently seen as Dr. Slotnick on the hit AMC series *Preacher*. She will next bring her talent to Amazon Prime's *Bosch* and the upcoming feature film *The Onania Club*.

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