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A Fundraiser for Geeta and Her Daughter

For me, compassion means to get into the shoes of others—to understand their feelings, ways of thinking, and opinions without judgment. Since childhood, I have tended to be an altruistic person, and in more recent years I have volunteered in NGOs, traveled to Nepal and Nicaragua to help youth in need, and organized a few fundraising activities.

The Dalai Lama has said: "If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion." This quote, displayed in a Social Psychology lecture video, made me think of a Nepali friend of mine in need. I realized that taking action to help my friend would not only make *her* happy, but it would make *me* happy too, as suggested in Michael Norton's TEDxCambridge video [How to Buy Happiness](#), which discussed research suggesting that people tend to become even happier spending money on others than on themselves.

It was then that I decided to invest time helping my friend.

I first met this friend, whom I'll call "Geeta" to protect her privacy, when I traveled to Nepal for two months in 2016 to serve as a volunteer teacher. She was a 26-year-old high school student at the time, and students at her high school often volunteered to teach underprivileged children in their free time. As it happened, we both ended up volunteering at the same primary school.

A Few Words About Geeta

Geeta was born without a right hand and grew up begging on the streets of Jhapa and living in an orphanage after her parents died. When she was a child, the orphanage provided her with an artificial hand, but after leaving the orphanage, she was unable to afford one. This disability makes it difficult for Geeta, who is now a 32-year-old mother, to raise her 5-year-old daughter or find steady employment.

Despite these obstacles, Geeta maintains a positive "never-give-up-attitude" that inspires others. To feed and care for her daughter, Geeta does her best to work one-handed in a small shop in Kathmandu, and as a hobby, she has even managed to compete as an athlete in the Paralympics in London, Asian Para Games in China, and Under-16 Asian Championship in Japan, winning several gold medals.

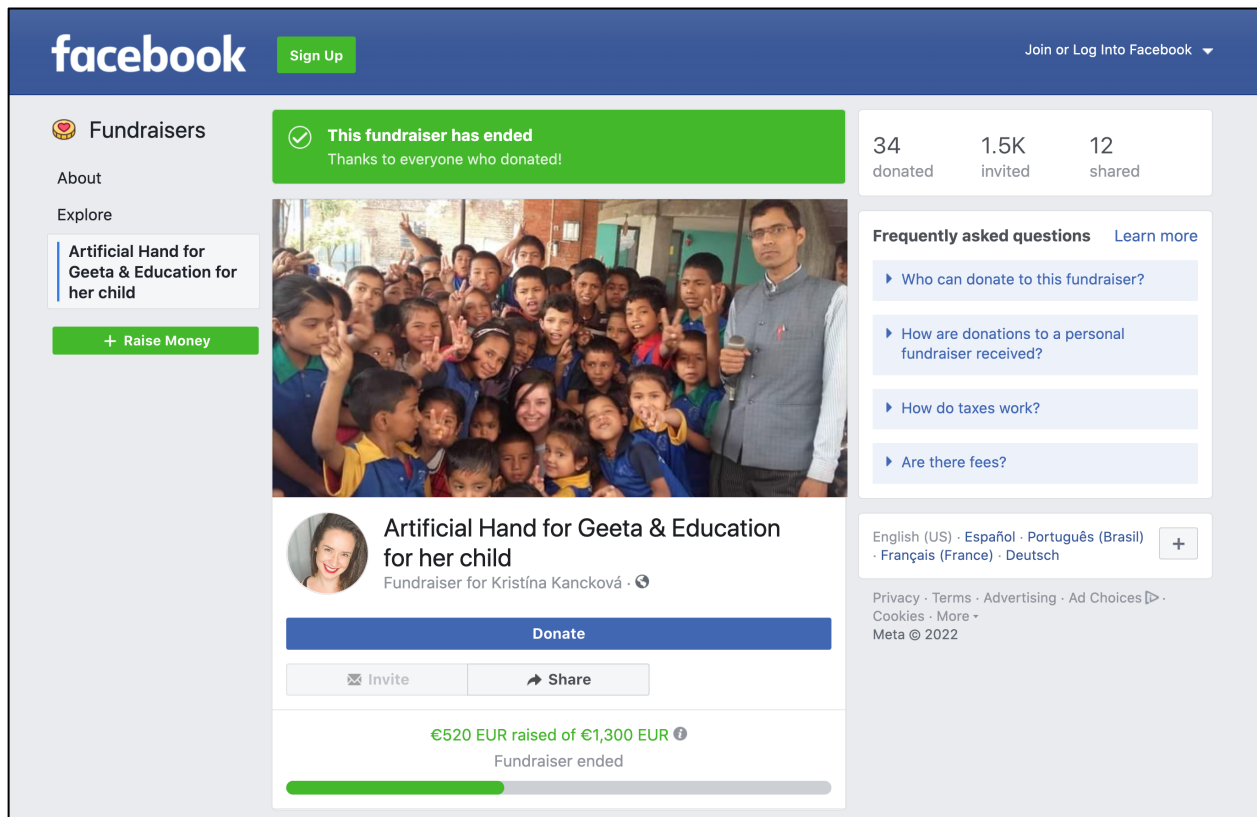


With Geeta (right), the school director (back), and kids (everywhere).

Raising Funds for Geeta

My Day of Compassion began with a video call to Geeta to ask how I might help her. Based on Geeta's most critical needs and a little research, I developed an action plan and created a Facebook fundraising campaign. At the center of this plan was the discovery that in Nepal, an artificial hand can be purchased for approximately €300—a sizable expense, but far less than the thousands of Euros it would cost in many other countries. I also learned that the cost of sending Geeta's daughter to school was €1,000 per year, so I set the fundraising goal to be a total of €1,300. You can see the page I created here:

<https://www.facebook.com/donate/323674198582676/>



The screenshot shows a Facebook fundraising page for 'Artificial Hand for Geeta & Education for her child'. The page is titled 'Fundraisers' and features a green banner stating 'This fundraiser has ended' with the message 'Thanks to everyone who donated!'. The page shows 34 donations, 1.5K invites, and 12 shares. A photo of a man with a prosthetic hand surrounded by children is displayed. The fundraiser is for Kristína Kancková. The amount raised is €520 EUR out of a goal of €1,300 EUR. The page includes a 'Donate' button, 'Invite', and 'Share' options. A 'Frequently asked questions' section is also visible, with questions like 'Who can donate to this fundraiser?' and 'How are donations to a personal fundraiser received?'. The page footer includes links for Privacy, Terms, Advertising, Ad Choices, Cookies, and More, along with the Meta © 2022 copyright notice.

With the help of friends, I ended the first day having raised over half the funds needed to buy an artificial hand, and by the end of the campaign, I raised €520—enough to buy Geeta the artificial hand and contribute more than €200 toward her daughter's education. I'm pleased to report that Geeta then bought the prosthetic hand and has, for the first time since her daughter was born, been able to lift up and hold her daughter with both hands.



A Few Other Acts of Compassion

Beyond helping Geeta and her daughter, I tried not to cause harm to others during my Day of Compassion. For example, I adopted a vegan diet by finding alternatives to my breakfast routine of scrambled eggs and coffee with milk. Likewise, I traveled by bicycle rather than car to avoid producing greenhouse gas emissions and polluting the environment. I even dried my laundry outside rather than using an electric dryer unnecessarily.

I also spent extra time giving our family dogs attention and affection, cleaned up some trash that I found near a lake (to prevent it from washing into the lake and killing fish), and watched a documentary film on climate change to learn more about the facts, to find out what I can do to help address the problem, and to become more compassionate toward people who are currently suffering the most from it.

How Others Reacted

The reactions people had to my behavior were very positive. People seemed especially pleased to participate in the fundraiser for Geeta. I hope that after spending money on another person, they became happier and more likely to carry out other acts of compassion in their own life, perhaps even triggering a snowball effect. Because I have 1,717 Facebook friends, it's possible that the effects of my Day of Compassion rippled out to other social circles.

Developing Compassion Through Education and Mindfulness

In my view, two of the best ways to develop more compassion are through education and mindfulness.

(1) **Education:** Compassion should be taught to young children by teachers at school and by parents at home. As with learning any other skill, children need positive role models, opportunities to practice, and constructive feedback so that they can improve over time.



(2) **Mindfulness:** Mindfulness is a tool that helps people reflect and live in the present moment, maintaining an awareness of their feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations as well as the feelings of others. When people become mindful that acts of compassion increase their happiness and life satisfaction, they're more likely to behave compassionately. Basically, I see a compassionate society as a healthier society in which each person lives a longer, happier, and more fulfilling life than they would in the absence of compassion.

What About the Future?

In the future, I hope to live a "Day of Compassion" every day. Living compassionately not only has a positive effect on my mood and feelings of self-worth, but on other people and the environment.

If I keep reminding myself what I did during the Day of Compassion and why I did it, I'm sure it will help me stay compassionate in the future. To keep that memory alive each morning and evening, I've posted a group picture from the Nepali primary school on a mirror in my bathroom. I don't have to do fundraising activities or big events daily—small acts of compassion, coupled with the practice of mindfulness, will have a beneficial impact on others, on the environment, and on me, too.