Life Right Now - Not So Random - by Jennifer Stephens

We've all heard of random acts of kindness. Encouraging others by randomly doing things meant to brighten a stranger's day, like leaving one dollar taped to a vending machine or paying for the person's order in the car behind you at the drive through.

These gestures ARE important and definitely shouldn't stop, but what if our kindness wasn't always random? What if we were intentional with our kindness? What if instead of just randomly sprinkling kindness onto people we'll never meet, we intentionally CHOOSE kindness when we're with our families at home. Even in those moments that make us want to scream. Like when the kids still aren't ready for school and the bus is pulling up. Or when our husbands leave their dirty clothes on the floor. Again. When it comes to the people in our home, we tend to react with anger, frustration, and eye rolls (that's not just me, is it?).

I know I'm guilty of offering grace to the people I work with, while tossing harsh words at the people in my own family. My coworker leaves a mess behind in the staff lunchroom, I don't bat a false eyelash, but my husband leaves a dirty dish on the counter - he faces the wrath of an angry wife! Shouldn't the people I share life with inside four walls be the very people I meet with an attitude of compassion?

In Ephesians 4:32, we read, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ forgave you." Kindness isn't a to-do list of various tasks to be checked off upon completion. It's a never-ending action. It's a way to be. And best of all? Giving kindness is FREE (Who doesn't love a good bargain?).

How to practice the art of kindness at home:

1. Say thank you for the little things they do (and say please too)
2. Leave little encouraging notes for them to find
3. Put the iPad down and look at them when they're talking
4. Run errands for them
5. Do things around the house without being asked (wash dishes, take out garbage)
6. Be forgiving - and say sorry when you should
7. Let someone else control the remote (at least every once in a while)

Maybe choosing kindness comes easily to you; it's second nature. That's how it is for my husband. He's always running to the store to grab something I think I desperately need when I'm just too tired to go myself after teaching all day. And he's really good about leaving sweet little notes on the counter. But lots of us (Me!) must learn to become intentional when it comes to choosing kindness at home. I haven't mastered this yet – my family will attest to this - but I am working on it. Just like an artist or athlete practices their craft to refine their skills, I am trying to become mindful about choosing kindness. For example, when my husband brings me a steaming mug of freshly brewed coffee on Saturday morning, instead of just taking it from his hand, I'll make the effort to say thanks before tasting that first sip. And when he begins telling me about something that happened at work that day, I won't check my Instagram feed until AFTER he's finished talking. I'll try to share the remote control too - even if it means my Hallmark movies are replaced with whatever sport is on TV that night.

Depending on your current season of life, the people in your home could be kids, a spouse, your parents, or any combination in between. No matter who we share a space with, let's ALL remember to choose kindness (even when they're driving us crazy!).