

Pass It On®...

The Simplest Word in our Language Can be the Most Inclusive

Junior high school can be a punishing place. It's where extroverts thrive, introverts are pushed aside and class distinctions are sharply defined as adolescents try to find a place to belong.

Jennifer moved from Cincinnati to a small town in New England in the seventh grade. Not an easy transition, since nearly every kid at the school had grown up in the town and social groups were well established. Jennifer walked the hallways alone for the first few days. Ate lunch alone. Walked home alone. On each corner of the town square sat an old stone church, four different denominations. It felt to Jennifer that every family had their place, and "no vacancy" signs were posted on every clique at school. Then one day, Cathy, the girl next to her in class, said "Hi."

A simple greeting can become a life preserver. The two talked, and it turned out they had much in common. More friends were introduced, including a boy nicknamed Gizzy, who lived next door to Jennifer. Their bedroom windows were only 12 feet apart. That made for the kind of meandering, late-night conversations where budding teenagers try to uncover meaning in the vortex of new emotions with a little darkness and distance between them to temper their vulnerabilities.

Cathy, Jennifer and Gizzy remained good friends through high school, those years on which it seems so much of our life depends. There were all the friend things: Football games and swimming holes and school dances, events that shape your social life if you are included. But high school doesn't last long, and soon Jennifer went west for college. She called Cathy, sent pictures, met a boy and got engaged. A friend 2,500 miles away is still somebody to share secrets with, and those growing-up years create bonds on the most fragile introductions. That word "hi" can do so much for a person over the years.

Five years out of high school, Jennifer called Cathy. "Hi" was all she could say before bursting into tears. Jennifer had just gotten the news: Gizzy had died in a car accident. That "hi" was all that needed to be said, because behind it were all the emotions

of "I need you. I want to be near you, somehow. Stay on the phone even when I'm not talking."

"Hi" can mean so much at the right time. Even the entire span of the country doesn't diminish true friendship. Like those conversations at night with a little space and moonlight between friends, love can find its honesty and its forever.

Who will you say "hi" to today?

Hi...PassItOn.com

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