

A Lesson In Giving

Compassion

Courage

Honesty

Commitment

Vision

STORY

Clair Nuer was a Holocaust and cancer survivor who taught people how to use the difficulties they face as levers to change their lives. Laura Gates was a successful businesswoman who had reached a point of both personal and professional despair. One day, Claire said something that touched her very deeply, "One person can be the rock that changes the course of a river." In this story, Laura tells how Claire's words inspired her to have the courage to tell one client the truth, instead of "minding her own business," and how this moment of truth changed everything. "The impact I was able to have by being compassionate and giving rather than getting was amazing," she says. "If each one of us made this kind of commitment, collectively we really could build a better world."

ACTIONS

Language Arts

- Have students role-play the "getting game" in a skit focused on school, sports, and friends. Then ask them to imagine themselves as adults with jobs, trying to support their families. Role-play how people get caught up in the "getting game" in trying to reach their own goals.
- Brainstorm ideas for how students can practice acts of kindness every day. Write ideas on small slips of paper and have students select one each morning to practice for the day.
- Ask students to respond in their journals about these questions: What do I want in my life? With my friends? In my family? In school? In the world?

Social Studies

- Design a questionnaire with students and conduct a survey of local people. Ask the question: "What changes could you make in your life today that would create a more humane world fifty years from now?"

Community Service

- Ask students to practice giving once a day for a month, and write about their acts of giving in their journal. Write a summary report at the end of the month about their experiences.
- Organize a school-wide event on the importance of giving. Hire a gifted speaker to challenge people's opinions and improve support for education. Invite families to attend.

Reflection Questions

1. What is the "getting game?" How does it affect you?
2. Have you ever been afraid to tell someone the truth about a situation?
3. What changes could you make in your life today that would create a more humane world fifty years from now?

Lessons You Can Learn

1. One person can be the rock that changes the course of the river.
2. We can learn to use difficult situations as levers to change our lives.
3. When people have a goal, they can work together instead of competing with others.