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Self-Acceptance, Appreciation, and Personal Achievement—Get All A's™

## How Your Smile Can Bring Peace

by [Susan Jacobs](#)

*Why is it that most people I see on the subway and wandering the streets of New York City, regardless of age, seem to have a frozen frown on their face? Was that the shape of their mouth since birth, or did their facial muscles atrophy from lack of use?*

Over the years, I always heard that it takes seven muscles to smile and forty-nine to frown. Not sure if it is true but try it and see which feels better and more natural. For me, it is most definitely a smile.

For many of us, we practice yoga, meditation, and prayer to find inner peace and connect to a higher consciousness and purpose. I grew up in an a-religious household where we could curse freely, but 'God' was not in our vocabulary. Prayer was not in my consciousness although I did believe in some higher something or other that I then called the 'Universe.' My way to purge, connect with spirit, and find answers came through writing.

Fifteen years ago, by chance, I found myself in a Kundalini Yoga class taught by Gurmukh Kaur while visiting Los Angeles. That one class changed the course of my life and me on the deepest possible level. I had been dabbling in yoga since a teenager but didn't practice consistently—a part-time wanna-be yogini.

Kundalini Yoga and Yogi Bajan, who brought this technology and teachings to the West in the late 1960s, changed all that. It introduced me to the experience of having a mental, emotional, and spiritual colonoscopy, gave me comfort in using the G-word, and introduced chanting and prayer into my daily-ish practice.

Prayer has become my respite; a place I go whenever needing answers, to reconnect, and for peace. Initially, I worried that I wasn't praying properly and wanted a 'How To' manual to ensure I chose the right words so my prayers would be answered. But I learned, at least for myself, that there is no wrong way. It is just a matter of speaking truthfully from my heart and being open to answers and signs in whatever form they may come. And they always do.

The other day I had an incident with a family friend in a restaurant when he turned on me for no apparent reason and began verbally attacking me, spewing a scary level of venom at me. To say this stunned me is an understatement. But even being taken by surprise, I miraculously remained calm and chose to excuse myself for a few moments, going into the bathroom to keep it together. Sitting in the bathroom, I started to pray, asking for guidance and the strength to remain calm, grounded, and with compassion.

This went against all natural responses I would have had some years ago when fight or flight adrenaline would have kicked in and made me want to win and hurt my attacker as much as he was hurting me. But on this evening, I wanted nothing to do with toxicity, so thanks to those few moments I took, I was able to reconnect with my integrity and the person that I am today.

I returned to the table, still under attack, smiled, remained grounded, and politely refused to continue the conversation, which was like throwing gasoline on a fire. The calmer and more disengaged I was, the more infuriated he became, until finally he stormed out of the restaurant.

I was proud of how I handled the situation only having barked back twice instead of with a full-throttle attack and realized that inch-by-inch does get you somewhere, even if you don't feel like change and progress are happening.

One of my yoga teachers said, "Even if you want to be dead, even if somebody is mad at you, just keep on smiling. See how fast he attacks you. You think a smile is not a power? It's the most powerful tool a human has."

So, what would our collective experience look like if everyone walked around smiling, saying hello to strangers, and saying yes to all opportunities even if there's nothing obvious in it for them? Now that's a way of life I will begin to implement immediately.

If you don't or only very rarely smile at strangers, challenge yourself, leave your comfort zone, and commit to smiling to three strangers a day for the next 30 days while en-route to work or while doing mundane errands. Keep a smile journal tracking how it makes you feel and the reactions you receive from the recipients of your smile, and then share your results here. Remember, "When you're smiling the whole world smiles with you."

### **About the author**

#### **Susan Jacobs**

Writing has been part of my DNA, career, and creative outlet for as long as I can remember. My joy is bringing to life stories of the world, its people, and its cultures.

I'm filled with an insatiable curiosity for life off-the-beaten-path and love to share stories of the unheard voices I find along the way.

Giving voice to things that matter, raising awareness, and expanding perspectives is what lights my fire and is the heart and soul of who I am and what I do.

I have contributed a chapter to two books: "Step Forward and Shine," published by RHG Media Productions, and "Pain, Purpose, Passion," published by The Round House Press. I'm a contributing blogger to Huffington Post, Identity Magazine, Thrive Global, Yogic Living, and Medium.com. My personal essays and writing have appeared in Pink Pangea, FourTwoNine Magazine, Extreme Sailing Series 2018 Official Magazine, Aquarian Times, Spirituality & Health, PR Week, and IndieWire. I'm working on my first memoir.

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