

## The Serendipity of a Smile

As I walked into my favorite coffee shop in Louisville, it was pouring down rain. I hate rain... It had been a hard week. School was in full swing and things with my personal relationships hadn't been going as smoothly as I'd hoped. To say the least, I was not in a good mood. I went to the counter to order my \$2 coffee, planning to seclude myself in the corner with my headphones and book, but saw something I wasn't expecting—a smile. Full-toothed, wide-mouthed, eye contact and all, the man who made my coffee smiled.

This stopped me where I was as, naturally, I smiled back, immediately making me question the distasteful attitude I'd put on for that day. This is one of many experiences I've had with smiles, but it's made me think about what I believe.

I believe in the power of a smile.

What's interesting about a smile is that the absence of one is highly noticeable while the presence of one is often taken for granted. There's an old saying that most of us know: "a smile is contagious." This statement is truer than most of us think. Psychologists have researched the existence of a "mirror neuron" that leads us to literally mirror particular actions those opposite us are doing. It's what puts a smile on your face when the person serving you at McDonald's smiles and says "Have a nice day."

I've heard since I was a kid that it takes more muscles to frown than it does to smile. So why live life with a frown when it's easier to be joyful?

Why when we take pictures does the photographer say "smile!"? Your smile is one of your most attractive features. So much can be communicated through the simplicity of a smile. Immense joy is exuded through a child's eyes as they smile back at you during a game of peekaboo. When a bride walks down the aisle, there's often talk about her dress and how beautiful her hair looked, but what I always look for is the smile that she and the groom exchange when they first make eye contact. In these moments when I watch the delight that's expressed on others' faces, I can't help but smile and share in part of the joy that they feel.

Research shows that smiles not only look better on your face, but they actually make you feel better. When you smile, serotonin—a neurotransmitter that produces the feeling of happiness and wellbeing—is released into your body. So next time you're getting ready for work and applying your makeup, don't forget to also put on your smile. When you're preparing for that interview, remember your secret weapon hidden just between your nose and chin. The power of a smile can literally change the track of someone's day. Don't underestimate the influence a flash of pearly whites can have over someone. I believe in the incredible power of a smile.