

The Beauty of a Compliment

Most of us would agree that a compliment – particularly from someone we love or respect – can change the day.

The late Bishop Fulton Sheen once said, “Baloney is flattery laid on so thick it cannot be true, and blarney is flattery so thin we love it.”

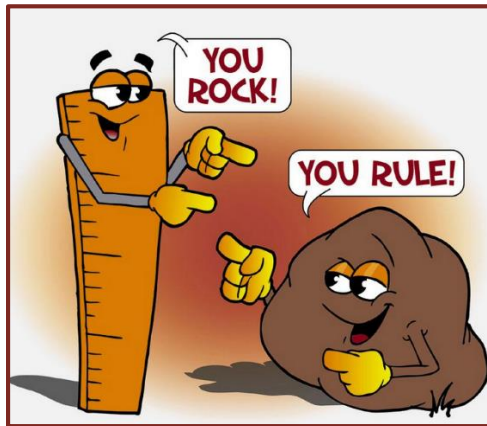
Well, I’m not talking about baloney or blarney, but rather about sincere compliments and the power they can have.

Steve Goodier, an ordained Methodist minister and author of numerous books about personal development, motivation, inspiration and making needed life changes, cited the story of Eleanor Roosevelt, the wife of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

“Eleanor Roosevelt never remembered being complimented by her mother, Anna, who was deeply disappointed in her daughter’s looks and demeanor,” he wrote. “She often called young Eleanor *Granny*. To visitors, Anna would say, ‘She is such a funny child, so old-fashioned that we always call her Granny.’”

Goodier said Eleanor would later recall, “I wanted to sink through the floor in shame.”

In a similarly harsh vein, Goodier wrote, “Anna sometimes admonished her young daughter, ‘You have no looks so see to it that you have manners.’ Yet through it all, Eleanor forever wanted her mother’s approval. But it wasn’t to be, for Anna died at the age of 29, when her daughter was only 8.”



We must wonder what it could have been like for little Eleanor if her mother shamed less and complimented more. Sincere compliments and acts of appreciation have the power to transform. We often remember them for years and they have a proven way of influencing future behavior.

Using compliments wisely was one of the secrets of the phenomenal success of Mary Kay Ash (of May Kay Cosmetics). “Everyone wants to be appreciated,” she often said, “so if you appreciate someone, don’t keep it a secret.”

Likewise, Mark Twain famously said, “I can live for two months on a good compliment.”

What is a *good* compliment? It’s one that is both sincere and timely. Insincere flattery is false. It patronizes at best. But a sincere compliment is a heartfelt expression of appreciation.

And when said in the right way at the right time, it has the power to call forth something beautiful in another person.