



Life Actually

By Kari Kampakis

The way you make me feel

My daughter Ella has a new morning routine.

Instead of waking up and heading straight to the den, she now stops at her sister's nursery. If Camille is awake, Ella takes her from the crib and carries her into the den with her. If Camille is asleep, Ella rustles around until her eyes open. *Then* she rescues her baby sister from behind the iron bars.

It's very sweet, and for a while I thought Ella was trying to be helpful. She calls herself Camille's "second mommy" and takes the job very seriously. At eight years old, Ella loves babies. She even dreams of having an orphanage one day.

I didn't realize how important this morning ritual was to Ella until the day I interrupted it. I heard Camille crying in her crib, and as Ella lay sound-asleep in a nearby bedroom, I took the baby and fed her breakfast. Soon after, Ella woke up. I heard her pitter-patter to the nursery, pause, and then rush to the den. When she saw Camille in the highchair, happily eating Cheerios, her face fell.

"Mommy! Why'd you get Camille out of the crib? *I* like to do that."

Ella was upset—and on the verge on tears. I tried to reason with her, explain that she'd have many more mornings to play hero, but she wouldn't hear it. The way she saw it, her day was ruined. I'd stolen her thunder.

I asked Ella a few days later why, exactly, she liked to get the baby. She thought a moment and then said, "Well, when I walk in her room, Camille looks sad. But as soon as she sees me, she's happy. She gets all smiley and bounces up and down. It makes me feel good."

I told Ella I could relate to that. I've always loved the rush of walking into a nursery and seeing my baby light up at the sight of me. What struck me about her answer was not the observation but her *awareness* of it. Even at a young age, Ella understands the powerful draw of someone who makes her feel good. It makes her gravitate toward Camille's nursery every morning. It induces tears on the days she doesn't get her "fix."

I learn a lot about human nature through my kids. In this case, I realized that what I thought was a lesson I'd tapped into over time—to seek the company of uplifting people—is actually intuitive wisdom. In other words, we're all wired to find love. When we meet someone who radiates it, we naturally crave their company.

Maya Angelou once said, "People will forget what you said, people will never forget how you made them feel." After coming across this quote recently, I thought about people I hadn't seen in 10 to 20 years. I immediately realized how true the statement is. Despite the time gap, I can remember who made me laugh, who made me cringe, who built me up, who dragged me down. Imagining some people brought a smile to my face. Imagining others put a pit in my stomach.

People do, indeed, remember how you made them feel.

Of course, it only seemed fair for me to consider the flip side, too: How have I made other people feel? Whose feelings have I hurt, inadvertently or not? Just because I'm not a bully or cold-hearted person doesn't mean I've never deflated someone's spirit. Maybe I ignored someone in a time of need. Maybe I shot down someone's self-esteem. Maybe I mistreated someone providing me a service. Whatever the case, I'm not naïve enough to believe that I've evoked nothing but happiness in others.

There's a reason why Ella longs to see her youngest sister each morning. It's the same reason we all flock to babies: Because they're heavenly, as pure and innocent as a person gets. They see our beauty through a magnifying glass, listen without judging, warm our hearts by their presence. In essence, babies are love. The way we feel as a result of that is something we can all take to heart.

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