

SPARK 115

(Matrix Code: **SPARK115.00** for StartOver.xyz game.)

DISTINCTION: Being nice is Gremlin food.

NOTES: There is a difference between being nice and being responsible – between being nice and being authentically yourself.

Being nice is a set of behavior patterns that may have been pounded into you since babyhood by parents, teachers, or other authority figures thinking they were making you socially functional, or were just making themselves comfortable at your expense. Perhaps they said, *Shhhhhh! Stop it! Be nice! Straighten up! Be a good boy. Nice girls don't do that. There's nothing to be afraid of. You have it so good. If you don't settle down I'll really give you something to cry about. Grow up! (meaning: Be numb!) Where's my sweet little angel? Put the pretty smile on.*

Perhaps that pretty smile saved your life. Perhaps you've worn that smile so often and so long it does not come off anymore. Your face molded to its form. You look in the mirror and do the charming smile, putting yourself into the familiar trance: *Yes, I'm fine. Everything's fine.* If you are nice then everyone is happy. Almost everyone...

Being nice is one of several *drivers* that your Box can adopt as its standard survival strategy. A driver is your Box's habitual survival impulse. Drivers are useful until mid-adolescence when you would naturally begin your rite of passage to adulthood. Initiation has been neglected by modern culture so your adult authenticity is trapped behind your childhood drivers. Additional drivers include: *Try hard! Hurry up! Be strong! Please authorities! Be perfect!* (These five affirming drivers were distinguished in 1975 by Taibi Kahler in the field of Transactional Analysis. Their opposites, the *denying drivers*, were distinguished in 2007 by Clinton Callahan in the field of Possibility Management.) Denying drivers include, *Be mean! or Be bad!* (instead of being nice), *Don't try at all!* (instead of trying hard), *Procrastinate! or Be slow! or Be late!* (instead of hurrying up), *Be a weak victim!* (instead of being strong), *Betray authorities! or Attack authorities!* (instead of pleasing authorities), *Make a mess! or Be a failure!* (instead of being perfect).

How is being nice Gremlin food? If you are being nice then you avoid being present. If you are not present then you do not have your center, your authority, or your power to take conscious action. The *Be nice!* driver deceptively glosses over superiority, resentment, and denial. Drivers cut you off from the archetypal power and intelligence of your adult feelings. All you get in exchange for being nice is reciprocal inauthenticity from others. You may as well watch sitcom reruns.

To detect when a driver is driving you, observe the words you use while speaking and thinking. Drivers use words like: *should, shouldn't, ought, ought not, must, mustn't, have to, cannot, always, and never.* These are Gremlin words because they divert you from taking responsibility. Your personal authority is subverted by external rules, morals or customs, allowing Gremlin to avoid responsibility for his actions and inactions.

For example, if someone is using you as an emotional garbage-can for their endless upsets your *Be nice!* driver might block you from saying, “*Excuse me for interrupting but I am not available for this kind of conversation. If you wish I could provide a distinction that would create clarity for you to take actions that might create different results, but I am not available to keep passively listening.*” The *Be nice!* driver replaces your personal authority with the imperative: *You mustn’t be rude*, while your Gremlin stuffs his rage until he can go home and dump it on your partner that night.

Gremlin avoids responsibility by arranging to be controlled. You are just as much controlled by what you oppose as by what you obey. This means being nice is no better than being mean, if it is a driver. Both provide abundant Gremlin food.

If you have an appointment with your parents at 11:00 am and your driver is *Hurry up!* then you will be stressed out and rushing around like the Mad Hatter even if you have plenty of time to get there. But if your driver is *Be late! Betray them!* or *Be a failure!* then all kinds of unimaginable incidents and accidents will occur to make it impossible for you to arrive on time. Instead of creating responsible results you will create irresponsible excuses, which are prime, low drama, Gremlin food. By conforming to your drivers, Gremlin eats your life.

EXPERIMENTS:

SPARK115.01 Use nonviolent nonconformance with your drivers. First, find out what your drivers are. To do this, memorize the following words: *should, shouldn’t, ought, ought not, must, mustn’t, have to, cannot, always, and never*. Especially *always* and *never*. Then each time you use these words, ruthlessly question yourself as to why. Ask, *What is driving me?* Ask until you get an answer. Each time you hear someone else use a driver, ask the same question. *What is driving them?*

IMPORTANT: While you observe yourself, *do not judge yourself*. Self-observation is neutral or it becomes self-flagellation. And, *do not try to change your behavior*. Behavior change does not come from trying to change your behavior. Behavior change comes from expanded awareness. Self-observation builds matrix to allow awareness expansion. Watch what you do in excruciating detail, and experience precisely what happens within you and around you. The key to being able to do something different is to be clear about what you are doing now. This means gaining clarity about what is driving you and how your Gremlin benefits from all this.

When you spot either an affirming driver (*Be nice!*) or a denying driver (*Be a failure!*), inquire deeper about what is really going on. Ask yourself, *who says I must be nice, must be strong, must be perfect? Who says I must be mean, must betray, must be a victim?* Ask until you get answers. Remember these answers.

Then ask, *who determines what is fast enough, what is trying hard enough, what is pleasing enough?* Ask, *What happens if I do not obey these drivers? What bad things might happen? What good things might happen? Which three drivers motivate me most?* Then choose one affirming driver (*Be perfect!*) and one denying driver (*Be late!*) and all week, no matter what, fulfill *neither* of them. Now you have some interesting experiments to do.