**The Thermodynamics of Kindness.**

In six years of teaching young children, I only once ever made the mistake of giving my students soda as a snack. Within minutes they were bouncing around the room, and it was a lesson I learned well. Fast. Whether it was the sugar, the caffeine, or simply the excitement of being given soda s a snack, the children ended up with a burst of excess energy that they needed to free themselves of somehow, and that somehow proved to be very disruptive. The fault was not the childrens’, they behaved naturally, freeing themselves of their excess personal energy by converting it into sound and movement energy; it was my naiveté that was to blame.

The nature of the universe does not allow for true creation or destruction, only change of form and movement. The “Law of Conservation” applies to both mass and energy, so regardless of how it seems in our perception, new mass and new energy will never come to exist, nor will existing mass or energy ever cease to exist. The catch is, that although all physically measurable forms of energy are bound by the “law of conservation of energy”, what we often refer to as “positive energy” — the goodness that comes into existence when we are kind — is exempt, and we can generate as much of it as we like.

So if the laws of conservation are really true, why don’t they seem to be in effect when we look around? The body of a newborn child is not physically “created”, but actually “assembled” out of materials that come from the bloodstream of the mother who nurtures it for nine months, and when a tree burns and its enormous bulk seems to have been destroyed, it has in fact just undergone a change from the organic substances that we know as wood into ashes that we see and water vapor that we do not.

Energy is invisible, so it may seem a little more complicated, but the rules are the same. A substance that has high levels of internal energy is by nature unstable and looks to free itself of excess energy and become more stable in the process. In the Hindenburg disaster of 1937, thirty-five people lost their lives when the world’s largest ever airship burst into flames and crashed into the ground. It was carried up in the air by an enormous balloon filled with very light hydrogen gas, an extremely unstable and high energy substance that is always looking to be converted into water. Because water is so stable meaning that it has so much less internal energy that hydrogen gas, all the excess energy that is contained in the hydrogen is released in the form of light, heat, and sound as the gas explodes and burns and turns into water. The physical hydrogen still exists as part of the water (H2O), but it is much more stable, as its excess energy was released into the atmosphere to continue its journey independently.

Coal isn’t nearly as unstable as hydrogen gas but it does have more energy than carbon dioxide gas, so we use it as a fuel, converting it into the more stable (lower energy) gas and releasing the excess energy as light and heat. The heat that is released is most commonly used in electric power plants to heat water, increasing its energy and converting it into vapor which then turns massive turbines using the energy it just gained, and the energy that was transferred from the vapor to the turbines then turns into electrical energy which powers the many conveniences we have in our homes, which give off heat and noise and light, and the cycle continues.

One thing that is certain, is that the energy will never disappear. It may go into storage or move far away from us to become irrelevant, but it will always exist, and will always be able to be converted and transferred.

Naturally then, when I increased the energy levels of my students by treating them to soda, they became less stable by definition and then freed themselves of the excess energy in the form of noise and movement that didn’t particularly suit me at the time.

We obtain energy from the food we eat and either store the energy in fat, or use it for any of a myriad of different processes and activities. When we use our energy to be kind and help someone, we can actually create new energy. Call it positive energy, or call it goodness, it is not measurable with a multi-meter or a Geiger-counter, and it is not subject to the law of “conservation of energy”, so we can create as much of it as we want.

It may go into storage in the person that we were kind to, they may keep the positive energy for themselves and never pass it on, but even in such a case it doesn’t disappear. It will always be inside that person contributing to their total positive energy levels, and to their overall wellbeing. The U.S. National Library of Medicine quotes research[[1]](#footnote-1) accumulated from more than three-hundred thousand subjects, indicating that positive social experiences increase ones’ likelihood of surviving disease by fifty percent. That makes it more relevant than obesity and exercise, and on par with cigarette smoking.

In addition to the immediate profit, we will often be kind to others when we feel good after someone else was kind to us and the person we are kind to will often do the same, and the initial act of kindness can end up propagating an endless chain of ever growing positivity and goodness.

The alchemists never worked out how to create more gold, but that’s ok. The universe as a whole and each of us individually profit far more from our innate ability to propagate infinite goodness and kindness that we could from any amount of gold. It breeds physical, emotional, and spiritual good health, and it makes all of us into happier people. Far more than can be said for the gold they were chasing.

1. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2910600/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)