

---

UCF Forum

---

2-21-2018

## Moments of Calmness Teach Us the Most About Love, Kindness

Barbara Thompson

University of Central Florida, [Barbara.Thompson@ucf.edu](mailto:Barbara.Thompson@ucf.edu)

Find similar works at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/ucf-forum>

---

### STARS Citation

Thompson, Barbara, "Moments of Calmness Teach Us the Most About Love, Kindness" (2018). *UCF Forum*. 294.

<https://stars.library.ucf.edu/ucf-forum/294>

Information presented on this website is considered public information (unless otherwise noted) and may be distributed or copied. Use of appropriate byline/photo/image credit is requested. We recommend that UCF data be acquired directly from a UCF server and not through other sources that may change the data in some way. While UCF makes every effort to provide accurate and complete information, various data such as names, telephone numbers, etc. may change prior to updating.

This Opinion column is brought to you for free and open access by STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in UCF Forum by an authorized administrator of STARS. For more information, please contact [lee.dotson@ucf.edu](mailto:lee.dotson@ucf.edu).



## Moments of Calmness Teach Us the Most About Love, Kindness

By Barbara E. Thompson  
UCF Forum columnist  
Wednesday, February 21, 2018

A few weeks ago I was sitting outside a classroom in UCF's Teaching Academy, waiting for a group to finish a session. It was around 6 p.m., and I had arrived early with the hope of relaxing for a few minutes before leading a workshop.

As an educator on topics associated with diversity and inclusion, my work largely consists of facilitating workshops and presentations, planning and participating in events, and attending meetings hosted by students, colleagues and community partners. I live both my professional and personal lives with a "gentle ferocity," advocating for the value of demonstrating respectful behavior toward each other, even when we may disagree.

I am passionate about what I do, and every day I pour my full attention and energy into my efforts. I am typically tired at the end of a day, but still driven by my belief that each of us can help create a better world.

While I was waiting, I heard music being played on the piano near the atrium of the Teaching Academy. The pianist was talented, and I noticed that the songs he selected all seemed to have a sweet sadness to them, weaving their way into my being and stirring up memories of times past and people long gone. I felt calm and at peace, emotions that come all too rarely in my life.

I am unaccustomed to these feelings, and I started to reflect on moments when I have felt this way.

One memory that came to mind dated back more than 20 years to when my son, David, was 2, and my daughter, Kelsey, was a newborn.

My son always has loved art, even at a very young age. A teacher once remarked that she couldn't believe that a child that young would sit for an hour coloring. Once, while the baby was sleeping, I rolled out a large sheet of brown wrapping paper and had David stretch out on the sheet. I traced his outline on the paper, and when he stood up I asked

him to draw clothes and a face on the “paper David.” He grabbed his markers and crayons and started to create his likeness.

About halfway through his drawing, his sister woke up. As I sat rocking her, I began to watch David coloring with delight and dedication. I suddenly felt completely at peace, with nothing else on the to-do list other than to love my children.

I also reflected on another moment of tranquility, when Kelsey was 3.

Our family celebrates Christmas, and my mother-in-law, Marguerite, enjoyed coming to our house to help with the decorating. They began to work together, assembling a small nativity scene on one of the living room tables. I was rushing around, pushing the progress of the decorating, and trying to get things done. I suddenly noticed what they were doing. They carefully put the stable in the center of the table and began to spread straw around. I watch as they gently placed each figurine, giving special love and attention to the infant Jesus.

They were completely absorbed in what they were doing, demonstrating a desire to get it right. They had such patience with their work, even when an angel fell or Joseph toppled over. I was enthralled in watching them for those few minutes, and many years later I still experience feelings of calmness and joy when I think back on this time.

As I lingered in my recent thoughts, the classroom began to empty, and I was pulled back to the present. When I went into the room, queuing up my energy and passion, I consciously acknowledged that while listening to the music in the atrium and reflecting back in time, I had been given another moment, another time when I felt tranquility and all-absorbing peace.

I began to wonder how often other people have these feelings and are able to separate themselves from their hectic lives to experience the calm. I deeply embrace my passion and drive, but I also know that recognizing the joy and peace of a moment are of equal value.

I have been neglecting this aspect of my humanness, and I have come to believe that I cannot force these moments, but must be open to going with these feelings when they surface in unexpected instances.

Perhaps these are the experiences that teach us the most about love, compassion, kindness and understanding.

As I began to facilitate the class, I noted to myself that I hoped to again visit “the calm” very soon, as it is a rich and meaningful place to dwell for a time.

*Barbara E. Thompson is the associate director of UCF's Office of Diversity and Inclusion. She can be reached at [Barbara.Thompson@ucf.edu](mailto:Barbara.Thompson@ucf.edu).*

