Educational Printout for Teens
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Global Childrens Fund

– Quotes To Live By –

"People are highly reasonable creatures. But they also have strong tendencies to act in the most ridiculous, prejudiced, amazingly dumb ways. They are naturally suggestible, superstitious, bigoted, and downright foolish – particularly in their relations with other people."
- Psychologists Albert Ellis & Robert Harper

When others act in a way that makes us upset, hurt, or angry, our first tendency is often to spend a lot of time searching for what we did to find out where we went wrong. This habit isn't a bad thing. In fact, it's good to be self-reflective, and to take a good look at our own actions to assess if there's anything we could be doing better.

Yet it's also important to remember that other people frequently do things not because they have a reason to, or because they carefully plan out their actions ahead of time, but because they're silly, irrational creatures. A girl gets teased at school in front of a group by someone she thought was her best friend. She's devastated, wondering what she did to cause such a sudden change of heart. What caused these girls, even her best friend, to suddenly dislike her? In reality, the other girl probably just got caught up amidst peer pressure and was trying to impress the group. It had nothing at all to do with disliking her. Sometimes we beat ourselves up too much, trying to read negative meaning into situations, when in actuality, there often is no sense or reason behind the things other people do. As Napoleon Bonaparte once said, "Never ascribe to malice that which is adequately explained by incompetence."

Self-reflection is good, but understanding that people often behave in crazy, irrational ways is also important. Be aware of this tendency not just in others but also in yourself. We will all act naturally suggestible, superstitious, bigoted, ridiculous, prejudiced, and downright foolish at times. But the more we realize this, the more we can correct ourselves as we do it, and the less time we'll spend foolishly making others miserable.