

My Friendly Neighborhood Mister Rogers

You may not believe this from a high school senior but Mister Rogers has been my hero ever since I can remember.

During my early years in elementary school, I grew to look forward to summer breaks. It was during these breaks that I could watch my favorite television show since it only aired in the mornings. This was the same time class was in session during the school year. After brushing my teeth, I rushed eagerly to the living room and turned on the television set. "It's a wonderful day in this neighborhood, a beautiful day for a neighbor," I sang along to the theme song. Mister Rogers arrived to see me! His wonderful personality lifted my spirits every morning with his patience in life and gentle nature.

Although *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* maybe just a boring television show to some, for me it was a place I could visit and feel welcomed all the time. It took me away from events in my life that I found unpleasant: my arguing parents, bullies at school, and my crime infested neighborhood. My school, home and neighborhood were often a concrete jungle. When making friends was difficult at school, I could always count on Mister Rogers to make me feel like I belonged. At the end of everyday, it was not my clothes or the way I styled my hair that made Mister Rogers my friend. Those things meant very little to him. "It's you I like, It's not the things you wear, It's not the way you do your hair--But it's you I like," he sang to me.

He taught me that there are many ways to show love. It can be by hanging up a coat before you are asked to do so or by cleaning up a room or by simply being understanding. Although, Mister Rogers' song "There Are Many Ways to Say I Love You" might have never

made it on the Billboard Top 100, the substance of his song surpasses most of the messages in popular music today regarding love.

Often, I would find myself find myself confounded with the mysteries of the world. I wondered about a lot of things. At age 8, I often asked myself, “What purpose do I serve on in this world?” Insecure I wondered if there were answers to all my questions and if it was okay for me to wonder so much. However, Mister Rogers informed me, “Did you know that it's all right to marvel? There are all kinds of marvelous things! You can ask a lot of questions about the world...” Those simple words gave a new a perspective on life. From then on I knew that the sky was the limit and the only limits that existed were the ones that I had set forth for myself. His words empowered me like a superhero with the power to change the world. With this in mind, I grew up with the sentiments that I could one day procure the world!

I have carried many of his words throughout my life and have learned to remember them when I require them the most. *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* was a breath of fresh air from the animated cartoon shows that are so prominent among young television viewers even today. His show created a sense of comfort and intimacy. He provided a world where doors have no need to be locked and every one in the neighborhood was always happy to see you and more than willing to greet you with a sincere “hello, neighbor” accompanied by a smile. Mister Rogers made me feel as if he was talking directly to me through the television screen. He understood me as he had known me for years.

I always wished Mister Rogers' neighborhood was an actually place I could visit. It confounded me that whenever he entered his home on the television show, his front door had no lock. It was if in Mister Rogers' neighborhood was a safe place where neighbors knew and

trusted each other greatly. At the time, in the neighborhood I was living in, it was not the same story. In my neighborhood we did not know any of our neighbors. It was unusual, perhaps even unheard of, for neighbors to greet each other in the neighborhood I grew up in. Such action would arouse suspicion in a neighborhood infamous for its low socioeconomic status, high crime rate and drug infestation.

Mister Rogers was my definition of what “cool” was supposed to be. While other kids my age idolized wrestlers and fictional cartoon heroes on television as fads, Mr. Rogers remains my hero to this day.

I wonder how my personality would have shaped itself if Mister Rogers’ enriching and salutary television show had never existed. Would I have grown up to be an untrustworthy person who only learned to hate and see the faults in all people? It’s impossible to say. I am always thankful to have been fortunate enough to have grown up in a world where Mister Rogers existed. So as Mister Rogers would sing, “let's make the most of this beautiful day. Since we're together we might as well say: Would you be mine? Could you be mine? Please won't you be my neighbor?”