

THE STARFISH STORY - Based on the story by Loren Eisley

MAKING A DIFFERENCE, ONE LIFE AT A TIME



I awoke early, as I often did, just before sunrise to walk by the ocean's edge and greet the new day. As I moved through the misty dawn, I focused on a faint, far away motion. I saw a youth, bending and reaching and flailing arms, dancing on the beach, no doubt in celebration of the perfect day soon to begin.

As I approached, I sadly realized that the youth was not dancing to the bay, but rather bending to sift through the debris left by the night's tide, stopping to pick up a starfish and then standing, to heave it back into the sea. I asked the youth the purpose of the effort. "The tide has washed the starfish onto the beach and they cannot return to the sea by themselves," the youth replied.

"When the sun rises, they will die, unless I throw them back to the sea." I surveyed the vast expanse of beach, stretching in both directions beyond my sight. Starfish littered the shore in numbers beyond calculation. The hopelessness of the youth's plan became clear to me and I countered, "But there are more starfish on this beach than you can ever save before the sun is up. Surely you cannot expect to make a difference."

The youth paused briefly to consider my words, bent to pick up a starfish and threw it as far as possible. Turning to me he simply said, "I made a difference to that one."

Throwing Starfish "I will Be the difference to this one"

- What struck you about the story?
I've often wondered when I've heard or read this story: what made the starfish wash up in the first place? What could have been done to prevent them from getting beached? Maybe there was a storm. Maybe there was something in the ocean.
- It's partially a question of where we want to put our time and resources, as individuals working to make a difference, and as a society. We want to save individual starfish, but in times of scarce resources, where can we get the most impact from what we do? While it's certainly important to help individuals in crisis, what could be done to prevent them from getting into difficulty? How could we move up stream?
- Where do you best make a difference? As in the story of the Starfish, we recognize the importance of making a difference in the life of each and everything. Our story continues on, however, because we also seek solutions to end the source of poverty, abuse and abandonment...



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