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阅读美国

Chicken Soup for the Soul of AMERICA

Jack Canfield
Mark Victor Hansen
Matthew E. Adams

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CHICKEN SOUP
FOR THE SOUL® OF AMERICA

Jack Canfield
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*This book is dedicated
to all of the people who make up
this great country we call America.
It is our hope that all can find peace
during this time of healing.*





Introduction

Although the events of September 11, 2001, were stunning, shocking and horrifying, they also brought out the best in us as a nation and as a people. As the days passed, the stories began to emerge—countless stories of heroism, selfless service, renewed patriotism and deepened faith.

A nation that was only months before divided over a deeply contested election came together around a single purpose and a single cause. Americans of every age, race, religion and location stepped forward in some way to offer their physical labor as well as their goods and services at Ground Zero in New York City and Washington, D. C., as well as their money to scores of charities that sprung into immediate action. Record numbers donated their blood to the Red Cross. Celebrities and noncelebrities alike gave their time and talents to the numerous benefit concerts that were performed around the country. Communities around the country and the world sent cards, posters, flowers and teddy bears to the surviving police officers, firefighters, soldiers and civilians, and gave their love and emotional support to anyone who needed it.

Rescue workers labored past the point of exhaustion in a desperate attempt to save those trapped beneath the rubble. People drove across the country to deliver needed telephone



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INTRODUCTION

equipment and stayed for weeks—working for free—to help make it operational. Volunteers cooked food, delivered water, manned supply depots, gave massages and offered counseling. Children sold everything from lemonade to their own toys to raise money for the victims' families. Radio stations organized thousands of people into large human flags that were photographed and sent to the exhausted firefighters in New York. People dug out old flags and displayed them proudly in a fervor of impassioned patriotism and as a show of support for the members of our armed forces. Indeed, some people went as far as painting their whole houses red, white and blue. Thousands of cards and posters were produced by the schoolchildren of America and sent to the victims' families. Hundreds of new songs were written and performed on Larry King Live and on NPR Radio. Hundreds of thousands of e-mails were sent and forwarded around the country and around the world as people attempted to share their experiences and to comfort their friends and family members. And candlelight vigils were held in every neighborhood and town square across our great land.

As we witnessed, heard and read about, these inspiring acts at the site of the attacks and in our own communities, schools and homes, heroism began to take on a deeper meaning. Patriotism became something more tangible to all of us. Reaching out to members of different faiths and ethnic backgrounds, caring for our neighbors and spending time with our families became more pressing priorities. What it meant to be an American living in a free country became more precious to us than ever before.

As these stories of heroism, compassion and service began to emerge, so did the hundreds of e-mails urging and encouraging us at *Chicken Soup for the Soul* to compile





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them into a book.

With the many stories that are now coming to light of victims placing a last phone call of love to their family members or spouses, of the many individuals who gave up their own lives to stay back and assist others, as well as the heroic efforts of rescue workers, I feel it would be a moving tribute to these individuals if these stories were collected and bound into a book in their honor.

Lori M., Orlando, FL

I am writing from Canada, knowing of the heavy hearts of all Americans. We, your neighbors to the north, are also observing the tribute and remembrance of those who lost their lives in the atrocious acts of September 11. Our hearts and prayers go out to those who grieve the loss of loved ones. I think that a compilation of stories from those so affected would help bring healing to the nation and the world.

Denise S., Canada

And so we have responded with this offering. Compiling and editing this book has been a difficult and challenging task. We wanted it to be the best book we had ever done, and we wanted to get it to people as quickly as possible. While this put tremendous pressure on all of us, it became a labor of love like no other book we had ever done. We hope we have succeeded in creating a book that will honor those whose lives were lost, comfort those who survived them, acknowledge those who stepped forward to help their fellow Ameri-



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cans and contribute to the healing of the enormous wound that was inflicted upon our national psyche.

In compiling this book we collected and read thousands of inspiring and poignant stories that were worthy of publication. There simply isn't space to include all of them. We are also acutely aware that there are many thousands of other stories that didn't surface in our research that also merit telling. We can only hope that we have achieved our goal of representing the broad range of experiences that deserve telling with the ones we have chosen.

Our intention was to create a collection that would indeed facilitate the healing of our nation—both individually and collectively. We know that this book will not necessarily stop you from shedding a tear; in fact, many stories may make you cry. But know that when you do, you will not be crying alone. We hope that when you put down this book you will be uplifted, encouraged, inspired and a little more aware that we really are all in this together—one country, indivisible, with a passion for liberty and justice for all as we pursue the fulfillment of our individual and collective dreams.





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SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

Today our nation saw evil...and we
responded with the best of America.

George W. Bush





A Time of Gifts

No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.

Aesop

The patterns of human history mix decency and depravity in equal measure. We often assume, therefore, that such a fine balance of results must emerge from societies made of decent and depraved people in equal numbers. But we need to expose and celebrate the fallacy of this conclusion so that, in this moment of crisis, we may reaffirm an essential truth too easily forgotten, and regain some crucial comfort too readily forgone. Good and kind people outnumber all others by thousands to one. The tragedy of human history lies in the enormous potential for destruction in rare acts of evil, not in the high frequency of evil people. Complex systems can only be built step by step, whereas destruction requires but an instant. Thus, in what I like to call the Great Asymmetry, every spectacular incident of evil will be balanced by ten thousand acts of kindness, too often unnoted and invisible as the "ordinary" efforts of a vast majority.

We have a duty, almost a holy responsibility, to record and honor the victorious weight of these innumerable little kindnesses, when an unprecedented act of evil so threatens to distort our perception of ordinary human behavior. I have stood at Ground Zero, stunned by the twisted ruins of the largest human structure

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ever destroyed in a catastrophic moment. (I will discount the claims of a few biblical literalists for the Tower of Babel.) And I have contemplated a single day of carnage that our nation has not suffered since battles that still evoke passions and tears, nearly 150 years later: Antietam, Gettysburg, Cold Harbor. The scene is insufferably sad, but not at all depressing.

Rather, Ground Zero can only be described, in the lost meaning of a grand old word, as “sublime” in the sense of awe inspired by solemnity.

In human terms, Ground Zero is the focal point for a vast web of bustling goodness, channeling uncountable deeds of kindness from an entire planet—the acts that must be recorded to reaffirm the overwhelming weight of human decency. The rubble of Ground Zero stands mute, while a beehive of human activity churns within, and radiates outward, as everyone makes a selfless contribution, big or tiny according to means and skills, but each of equal worth. My wife and stepdaughter established a depot on Spring Street to collect and ferry needed items in short supply, including face masks and shoe inserts, to the workers at Ground Zero. Word spreads like a fire of goodness, and people stream in, bringing gifts from a pocketful of batteries to a ten-thousand-dollar purchase of hard hats, made on the spot at a local supply house and delivered right to us.

I will cite but one tiny story, among so many, to add to the count that will overwhelm the power of any terrorist's act. And by such tales, multiplied many millionfold, let those few depraved people finally understand why their vision of inspired fear cannot prevail over ordinary decency. As we left a local restaurant to make a delivery to Ground Zero late one evening, the cook gave us a shopping bag and said:

“Here's a dozen apple brown bettys, our best dessert, still warm. Please give them to the rescue workers.”



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How lovely, I thought, but how meaningless, except as an act of solidarity, connecting the cook to the cleanup. Still, we promised that we would make the distribution, and we put the bag of twelve apple brown bettys atop several thousand face masks and shoe pads. Twelve apple brown bettys into the breach. Twelve apple brown bettys for thousands of workers. And then I learned something important that I should never have forgotten—and the joke turned on me. Those twelve apple brown Betties went like literal hotcakes. These trivial symbols in my initial judgment turned into little drops of gold within a rainstorm of similar offerings for the stomach and soul, from children's postcards to cheers by the roadside. We gave the last one to a firefighter, an older man in a young crowd, sitting alone in utter exhaustion as he inserted one of our shoe pads. And he said, with a twinkle and a smile restored to his face, "Thank you. This is the most lovely thing I've seen in four days—and still warm!"

Stephen Jay Gould

SEPTEMBER 11, 2001





They Took a Vote

Valor is a gift. Those having it never know for sure whether they have it until the test comes.

Carl Sandburg

The strength of a country comes from its people. It always has and always will. No matter what pomp and bravado a government shows, the solidity of the nation is directly determined by that of the individual citizen.

America has been shaken to its core by acts of terror. Many, including our president, have said we are strong, that we have resolve and that we will persevere. These words mean nothing to terrorists. Terrorists wait to see the actions of people, of individuals, to see if they will buckle and cower.

The cowards who killed our sisters and brothers, our mothers and fathers, our sons and daughters should know what happened on the flight they unsuccessfully tried to turn into a bomb over Pennsylvania. So should the rest of our fellow countrymen and women. In the history of this country of freedom, there has never been an event more emblematic of the values and heroism of the United States of America.

The flight had been hijacked, and was being turned around to be used as ammunition against innocent civilians at some unknown target in Washington, D.C. After some hurried cell phone calls to their loved ones, passengers learned of the World

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