

The Only Way to Delight People

As Shakespeare says, “Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more.”

Most of us poor players play our parts and live our lives by a script.

The script keeps most people in well-worn tracks. The script is questions and responses that don’t put anyone in danger. The script is what keeps eyes averted, hands on phones, hands in pockets, mouths clenched downward.

The script is safe. If the script is a human’s default mode, then by default, we live in a world without delight. No one has ever been delighted by the expected.

Remember the last time you were delighted – really beaming with delight? It probably happened when someone did something that surprised your expectations in a good way. An actor in a play ad libbed a hilarious line, a company sent you a free gift basket, someone sent you a detailed and thoughtful note. Delight happens in novelty and unconventionality.

This is why kids are so delighted all the time. They’re constantly encountering something new. They’re constantly being surprised because the world is still new to them.

The world loses its delight for some people.

We have the potential to keep that true surprise of children, and therefore keep that true delight. But we have to go off script to get it.

Next time you’re tempted to follow the script, ask yourself what would create more delight in the world. Then take the leap of faith and do it.

Be the first to say hello. Dance when nobody else is willing to try. Talk to strangers. Give to strangers. Tell a joke. Offer moral support. Lend a hand.

Go off-script.