

The Lazy Editor



Could You Be a Hero?

How one teen found her inner superpower—and how you can too

By Elizabeth Svoboda

For Pennsylvania teen Graceanne Rumer, an everyday bus ride became a life-or-death situation.

DIRECTIONS: Read the following article, which contains many terrible mistakes. Then follow the prompts in the box on p. 23.

1 It seemed like an ordinary bus ride home for Graceanne Rumer, then 17. Feeling the strain of a heavy load of schoolwork, she struggles to keep her eyes open. Suddenly, though, Graceanne was jolted awake. The bus driver had passed out; he was slumped over the wheel and the school bus veers out of control—straight into a lane of oncoming traffic.

2 Though she was gripped by panic, Graceanne springs to action. She rushed to the front of the bus, grabbed the wheel, steered away from the oncoming cars, and carefully pulls the bus to the side of the road. It is as if she is on superhero autopilot. “I didn’t think,” Graceanne recalls. “I just kind of did it.”

3 You might think you don’t have the special blend of bravery and selflessness it takes to step up like Graceanne did, but it turns out heroes weren’t born—they’re made. “Some people think that to be a hero, you have to have some special skill that goes beyond what

WE LOVE THIS STORY. TOO BAD WE COULDN'T BE BOTHERED TO EDIT IT! WILL YOU FIX IT FOR US?



ordinary people have,” says Zeno Franco, a psychologist from the Medical College of Wisconsin who studies heroic action. “What we’re saying now is that anyone can become a hero.”

4 Phil Zimbardo agrees with Franco. Zimbardo is a pioneer in hero research. Zimbardo founded the Hero Imagination Project (HIP). HIP is in San Francisco. HIP helps ordinary people learn how to be everyday heroes. Zimbardo has found that people who help others on a regular basis (such as by volunteering) are more likely to behave heroically. That means you can give yourself “hero in training” assignments. Shovel the snow from your neighbor’s driveway. Tell a great teacher how much she means to you. Stick up for a kid who’s being bullied.

5 Scientists are still studying the connections between everyday generosity and high-stakes heroism, but real-life examples do point to a link, for example, after the Boston Marathon bombings, many doctors and nurses rushed into the fray to aid victims, because they



devote themselves to others day-in and day-out, helping was second nature to them.

6 Would you behave as heroically as Graceanne did? It’s hard to know for sure until you tested in the real world. But as you seek out ways to help others, keep in mind that seizing big-time heroic opportunities requires good judgment. If you try to tackle a bank robber who’s wielding a gun, you could get hurt. Sometimes it’s better to alert the authorities than to put yourself in danger.

7 Ultimately, your quest to be a hero will be most successful if you start small, with generous acts you feel confident you can carry out. While mowing your elderly neighbor’s lawn probably won’t get you on the cover of *People* magazine, it will make a very real difference in someone’s life—and you will feel great about yourself for doing it. And by being kind to others on a regular basis, you might find yourself stepping up in the same outsize and seemingly effortless way that a superhero does. ●

FIND IT/FIX IT

DIRECTIONS: Can you find the following errors in the article and fix them? Write the answers on your own paper.

Paragraphs 1, 2 & 3: Seven verbs in these paragraphs are in the wrong tense. Can you save them from their wrongness?

Paragraph 4: Many of these sentences have the same rhythm, and it makes the writing really b-o-r-i-n-g. Rewrite this paragraph with more variety.

Paragraph 5: That rambling sentence just goes on and on and on. Be a hero and break it into several shorter sentences for us.

Paragraphs 6 & 7: *You’re* and *your* are easy to mix up—clearly. Won’t you fix the two errors?

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