So here's the story...

My name is Joseph Kwesiga. Im 23, from Uganda, and I've lived in 11 different countries.

What happens when you move to NYC, and every lesson you've learned does not apply?

My inability
to relate and
understand the
people here led me
to create the idea
of "me" and "the
other"

For the first time in a long time I felt that connecting was scary and difficult. And I did not feel like I was able to express this to anyone. I believed no one would understand.

It is thoughts like these

That give birth to statistics like these.

Suicide is the third leading cause of death for young people 15-24 years old.

#3

As many as one in 33 children and one in eight adolescents have clinical depression.
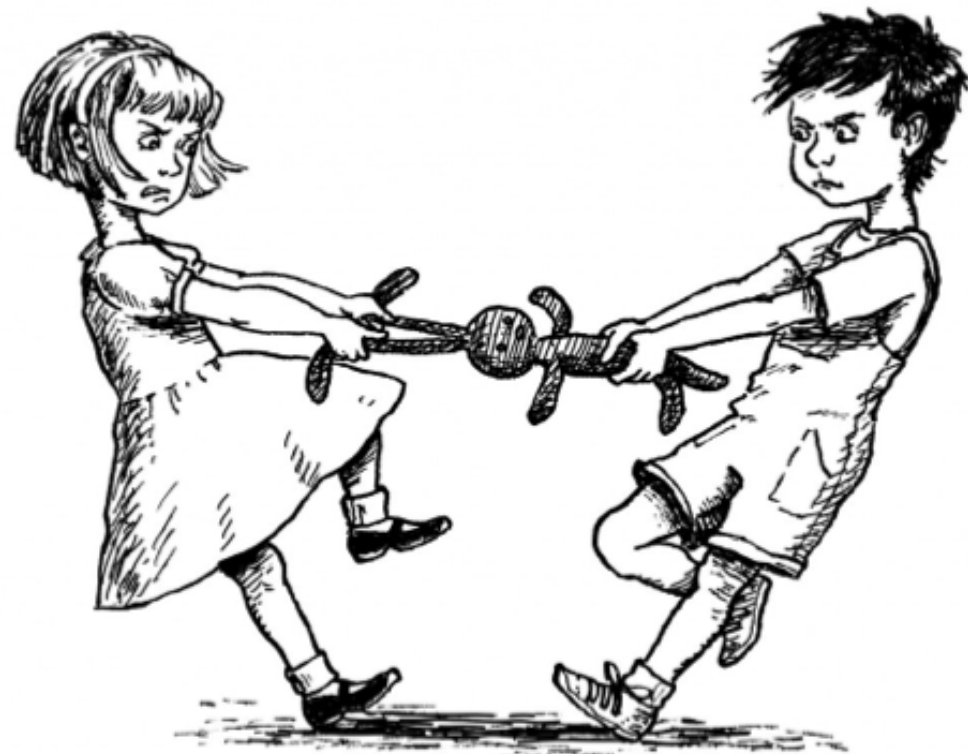
1/33

1/8

13 percent of the overall US population is on antidepressants. (41 Million)

13%

So here's the
issue.

Kindness and sharing have become difficult.

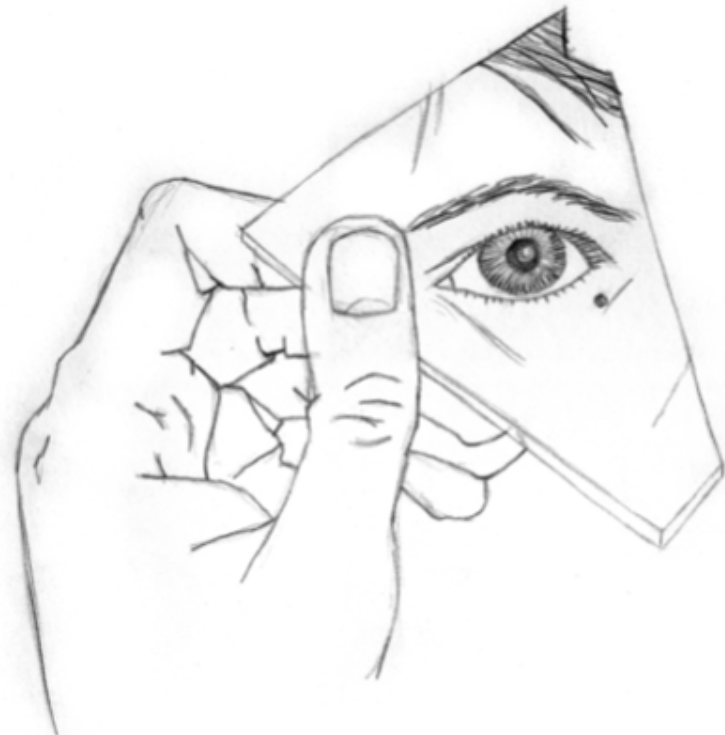In a random study group of 50 people. 74% did not consider themselves as having stories worthy of sharing.
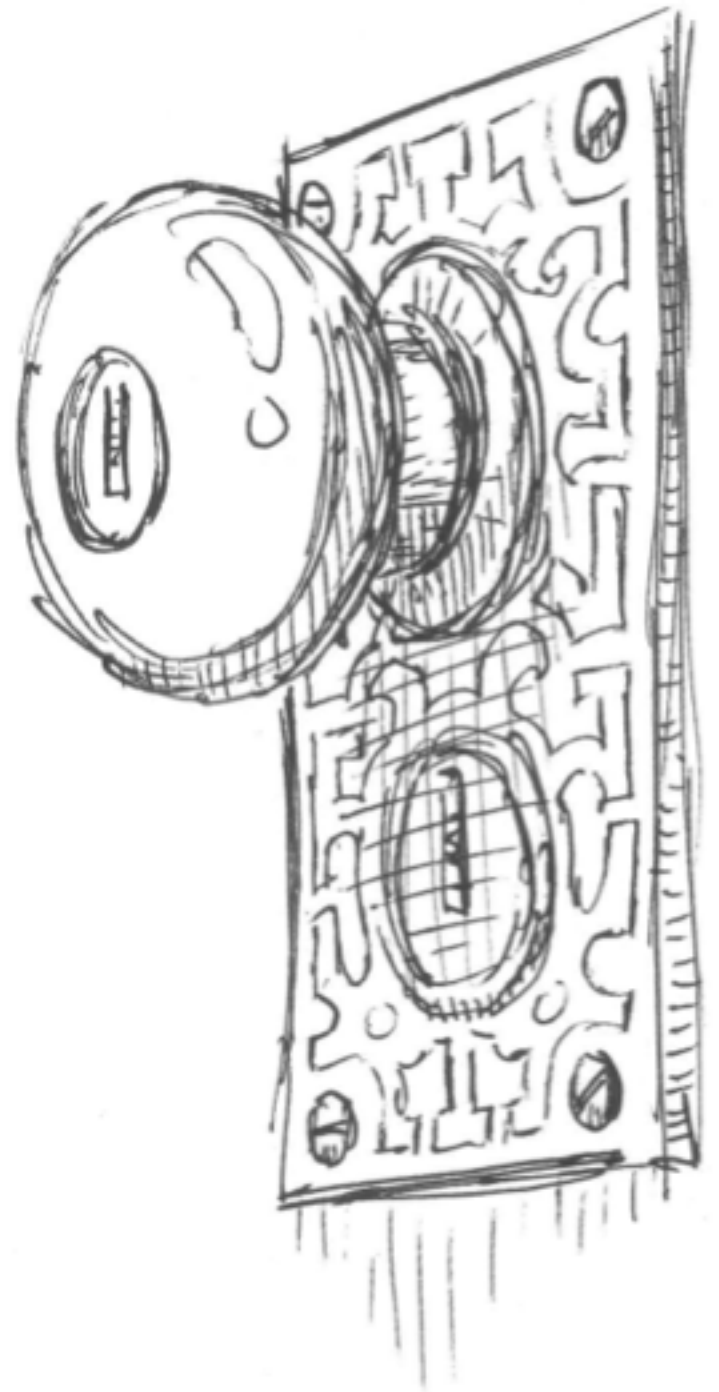
74%

Of the 26% that did, 4% were under the age of 21.

4%

However, they all have more in common than they know.

People aren't seeing themselves or their experiences being of importance to others.

Something led them to develop a closed off nature.

47% of the individuals reported that they go months without interacting with family

47%

This led to the insight that there was an important form of community and bonding missing from their daily routine.

Love, loss, stress, and longing. They had all experienced these things at some point.

Everyone is in a silo. We are capable of helping each other, but we do not feel safe sharing our thoughts.

However, they didn't feel like anyone could relate.

This led to the insight that there was an important form of community and bonding missing from their daily routine.

Love, loss, stress, and longing. They had all experienced these things at some point.

So how do I get Manhattanites (my audience) to loosen up?

In order to create an effective prototype platform, I created probes To better inform me on how people currently engage with each other.

Building A Capture Method

Mark off the social media you currently use and below write the most convenient element about it.

☐ ---------- ---------- | ☐ ---------- ---------- | ☐ ---------- ----------

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I chose the three most popular methods of communication as a means to reach my coordinate audience. Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr.

However, the goal was to not just have the intervention live online.

I needed people to actually physically interact with each other.

The Thesis

I aim to creating environments that encourage and promote the sharing of thoughts and experience by creating a culture of low barrier, constructive interaction between strangers.

The goal is to empower people to air out things that often go unnoticed, unseen, and unsaid.

Here's what I did about it...

I set out to make kindness easy.

With the goal of cultivating a culture of sharing amongst strangers.

People like convenience.

So I had to design a low barrier way to get people to interact.

And it all started with a card.

#HELLO RANDOM STRANGER

A card that has me become a random stranger that helps people.

#HELLO RANDOM STRANGER

#HELLO RANDOM STRANGER

Do something nice for a stranger.

Pass this card on.

Do something nice for a stranger.

Pass this card on.

I will speak to two of the most impactful and life changing moments for me during this experience.

The first story begins in the subway on 23rd and 6th.

I saw a man in the subway was being completely ignored by everyone around the platform. I suppose that's typical in NYC but this man genuinely needed help. It turns out the man was deaf and very blind and just needed help understanding if he was about to catch the right train.

However he could not speak very well due to his deafness. So I helped him on to his train. When all was said and done the man pulled out a small note pad and pen from is backpack and pressed it really close to his face and started writing. He put a lot of effort in to this task.

About 40 seconds later he pulls the pad away from his face, looks it over for a second, tears off the page, places it in my hand and smiles. I read it and instantly begin smiling and pat the man on the arm letting him know I understood him. The note read "bless you". This was my very first deed as the Random Stranger.

My latest experience was the most intense.

I was randomly talking with a young man in his 20's that seemed to have a lot on his mind. We were seated on a bench in the Lower East Side.

In our long conversation the man opened up and told me something I would have never expected to hear. "if you ever try suicide. Make sure it's not your mother that finds you".

All I could do to comfort the man was listen and let him offload.
But the fact that he was able talk about it to a stranger and leave the conversation with a little less weight on his mind was a powerful experience for both of us.

So these cards...

Had me leave
my shell..

So that others
could leave theirs.

So that their day would
suck a little less.

And this is what came of those interactions...

People payed it forward.

To catalog the experiences I created a portal for where these storied could live.

Using the hashtag #HelloRandomStranger I was able to track submissions and also see how people were choosing to interact with my project and strangers alike.

newstrangers.tumblr.com

I don't like it when I need somebody and they don't see why I do... Have you ever felt this? - Stranger

TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALLGAME

After a nice chat with an elderly gentleman on the Philadelphia subway about his lifelong love for the Phillies, I and two teenaged boys standing nearby were surprised when he invited us to join him in his dugout level seats for a game that afternoon! Good times were had by all!

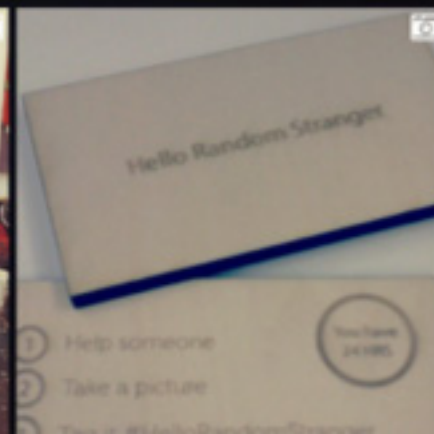## WHAT I NEED TO BE GREAT

I am struggling/ I need optimism

#HelloRandomStranger #submission
2 weeks ago   ♡ 1

FREE HUGS

Gave a hug to a crying girl after seeing her rough break up.

WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

Talk about an experience (good or bad) with another individual that impacted you, or talk about what you need to be great.

Text

Name (required)   Email (required)

Title   Optional

B *i* S & & ≔ ≡ & |→   <html>

Tags: ☐ HelloRandomStranger

☐ I accept the Terms of Submission   Submit

People were able to visite the site and submit stories.

People had no restraints on what they chose to share. The point was not to limit people's voices but give them a place in which they felt anonymous and completely safe saying whatever was on their mind. However, if posts do become aggressive they are able to be moderated.

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It was interesting to see that people started breaking physical boundaries and then bring those stories back in to the digital community.

FREE HUGS

Gave a hug to a crying girl after seeing her rough break up.

People also have the ability to comment and reply to posts by other strangers. Furthering the ways in which the community of strangers could interact and help each other.

I am a human soul. I need love, care, respect, and spaces and people that help me thrive and self-realize.
#hellorandomstranger

Just because you are a stranger does not mean that you do not deserve my love, care, and respect.

-Random Stranger

These efforts got New Yorkers to take time out of their their day to acknowledge each other.

All thanks to a little card...

With big potential.

#HELLO RANDOM STRANGER

The Potential.

The bigger the community of strangers grows the more experiences that are shared.

A community which has the power to transform its members to be more attune to the people they meet day to day.

I see real potential for this intervention in the context of schools dealing with teens between 16-19.

If anything teens are the ones with the most to say but have the most unheard voice.

The implementation of my intervention with a teen audience could allow students to understand the complexities of feelings and experiences within their school community.

Effectively sensitizing students and allowing them to be more empathetic towards each other.

A college in upstate New York has expressed interest in implementing the project within their schools. In order to bolster a stronger sense of community in their first year students.

That is where I would like to see my project in the near future.

Helping strangers help themselves.

Thank you.
#Random Stranger