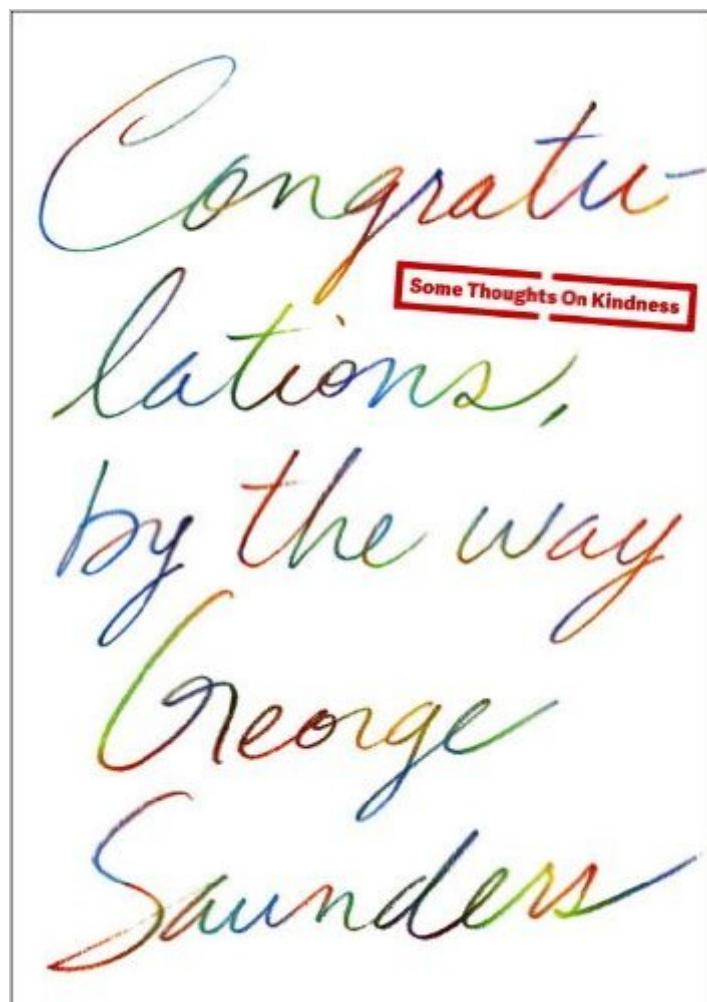


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Congratulations, By The Way: Some Thoughts On Kindness



Synopsis

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLERThree months after George Saunders gave a graduation address at Syracuse University, a transcript of that speech was posted on the website of The New York Times, where its simple, uplifting message struck a deep chord. Within days, it had been shared more than one million times. Why? Because Saunders' words tap into a desire in all of us to lead kinder, more fulfilling lives. Powerful, funny, and wise, *Congratulations, by the way* is an inspiring message from one of today's most influential and original writers. Praise for *Congratulations, by the way*: "As slender as a psalm, and as heavy." —The New York Times "The graduating college senior in your life probably just wants money. But if you want to impart some heartfelt, plainspoken wisdom in addition to a check, you can't do much better than [Congratulations, by the way]."—Entertainment Weekly "The loving selflessness that [George Saunders] advises and the interconnectedness that he recognizes couldn't be purer or simpler."—Kirkus Reviews "Warm and tender."—Publishers Weekly

Book Information

Hardcover: 64 pages

Publisher: Random House; 1st edition (April 22, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0812996275

ISBN-13: 978-0812996272

Product Dimensions: 5 x 0.4 x 7.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 6.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars—See all reviews (157 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #54,750 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #89 in Books > Education & Teaching > Schools & Teaching > Education Theory > Philosophy & Social Aspects #230 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Ethics & Morality #1823 in Books > Self-Help > Personal Transformation

Customer Reviews

This is a bound and published edition of Saunders' commencement speech at Syracuse University in 2013. You could certainly complain that it's not really a "book", that it was originally published in the New York Times, and that it is very brief. But it's worth reading. What advice do you give to graduating students? Often it's about how to succeed in the world -- e.g., find something you love to

do and do it. And there have been memorable commencement speeches of that type. Some go beyond that, e.g., the speech that Steve Jobs gave to graduating Stanford students in 2005. Saunders gives a very simple message -- be kind. He asks himself what he regrets in his own life, from the vantage point of decades that the students he is talking to haven't experienced yet. And the thing that he identifies is his indifference toward a girl in his school when he was young. He wasn't mean to her, but he ignored her when she needed kindness. I can certainly think of the missed opportunities in my life when I wasn't kind to someone -- it would have taken so little. My life won't be any the less for having missed that last jump shot in the final seconds of a basketball game. It will be less for having turned away from someone who I could have helped have a better life. Few of us can say that we've kept the right balance of self-interest and kindness. I've read criticisms of Saunders' speech, that he ignores the material difficulties facing students who graduate from college today, with poor employment opportunities and often carrying heavy college loan debts on into their distant futures. I would imagine those things weigh more heavily on their minds than whether or not they are kind persons.

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