



The benefit of the doubt

It's priceless.

When we're used to it, when it comes along as a result of nothing we did to earn it, we take it for granted. But when you don't have it, it makes everything more difficult.

The benefit of the doubt is what happens when instead of being skeptical, we're inclined to believe. It's when instead of defaulting to ignoring a stranger, we seek to engage with them. It's the convenient choice, not the exception.

In different settings, we grant the benefit of the doubt to the big man on campus, the homecoming queen, the tall person, the celebrity, the person who apparently has amassed a lot of money, the one who fits our cultural mores, the male, the white person, the conventionally pretty one, the conventionally abled one, the one who is popular. But it also might be the class cut-up, the insurgent or the renegade.

Status roles are the silent measure of our days, and we often default to reinforcing them based on an unseen and uncommented on status quo.

Every time we fail to give the benefit of the doubt to someone who can create value, we not only hurt them, but we hurt ourselves as well.

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