

Everyone should do a stint waiting tables. Everyone should do a stint telemarketing.

It would go a long way toward teaching us all compassion and patience. It's a perfect opportunity to practice that bumper sticker dictum to 'practice random acts of kindness'.

I know its acceptable to trash, harass, and malign telemarketers. They are a blight on the landscape and are universally hated. In 2003 the might and power of the U.S. federal government was brought to bear on telemarketers with a national do-not-call list. This is a law requiring the attention of 535 members of congress, the signature of the President, and the work of untold bureaucrats to prevent a little bell from ringing in your house.

But do you think the people ringing that bell really want to be calling you? No.

But it pays. It's a job. Hate their employers; hate their managers, but the people placing the call are just trying to make a buck and the last thing they need is your lip. If it angers you, let the machine grab the call.

I've never met anyone who held a telemarketing job despise telemarketers. Even if it was a 2-week gig in college like mine (unknown to me we were selling counterfeit coupon books), a former phone jockey will let down the caller gracefully...and maybe offer some encouragement.

But this is a time where the hard of hearted really show their strips. There's a joy some have in denigrating telemarketers. They can't step away from themselves long enough to think about the day the person at the other end of that call is having. The 100 prior calls that went badly.

Likewise for wait staff – waiters, waitress, or the more robotic sounding – waitrons. You can always tell the jerks who never pulled a double shift, whose feet never hurt from standing for 12 hours, and who never went home with the smell of food clinging to their clothes. They're always the ones to be rude about waiting too long for a table on a Saturday night or skimp on the tip because the food was a bit late. They're the ones who use Mr. Pink from Reservoir Dogs as their role model.

Too many people who love eating out don't like restaurant people.

Those who never had to turn a six top in time for a 7 o'clock reservation or been stiff on a tip are the first to be rude to a waiter.

They don't see the expeditor who stiffed you because you wouldn't go out with him or the chef who fouls the order because he's hung or the other table that's sent a burnt steak to be cooked some more.

Sure, we've all worked crappy jobs, but only waiting table and dialing that phone gives you a constant stream of negative feedback and personal attacks.

And nowhere will a kind word of encouragement or a couple extra bucks of a tip really have such an affect on uplifting somebody's day.