Make It COUNT

The Art of Creating Measurable Change

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mastering the art of change

Creative Activist Toolkit 004

in partnership with

CREATIVE VISIONS FOUNDATION

youth philanthropy council

A Committee of

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Once upon a time,
there was a wise
man who used to
take daily walks
on the beach.

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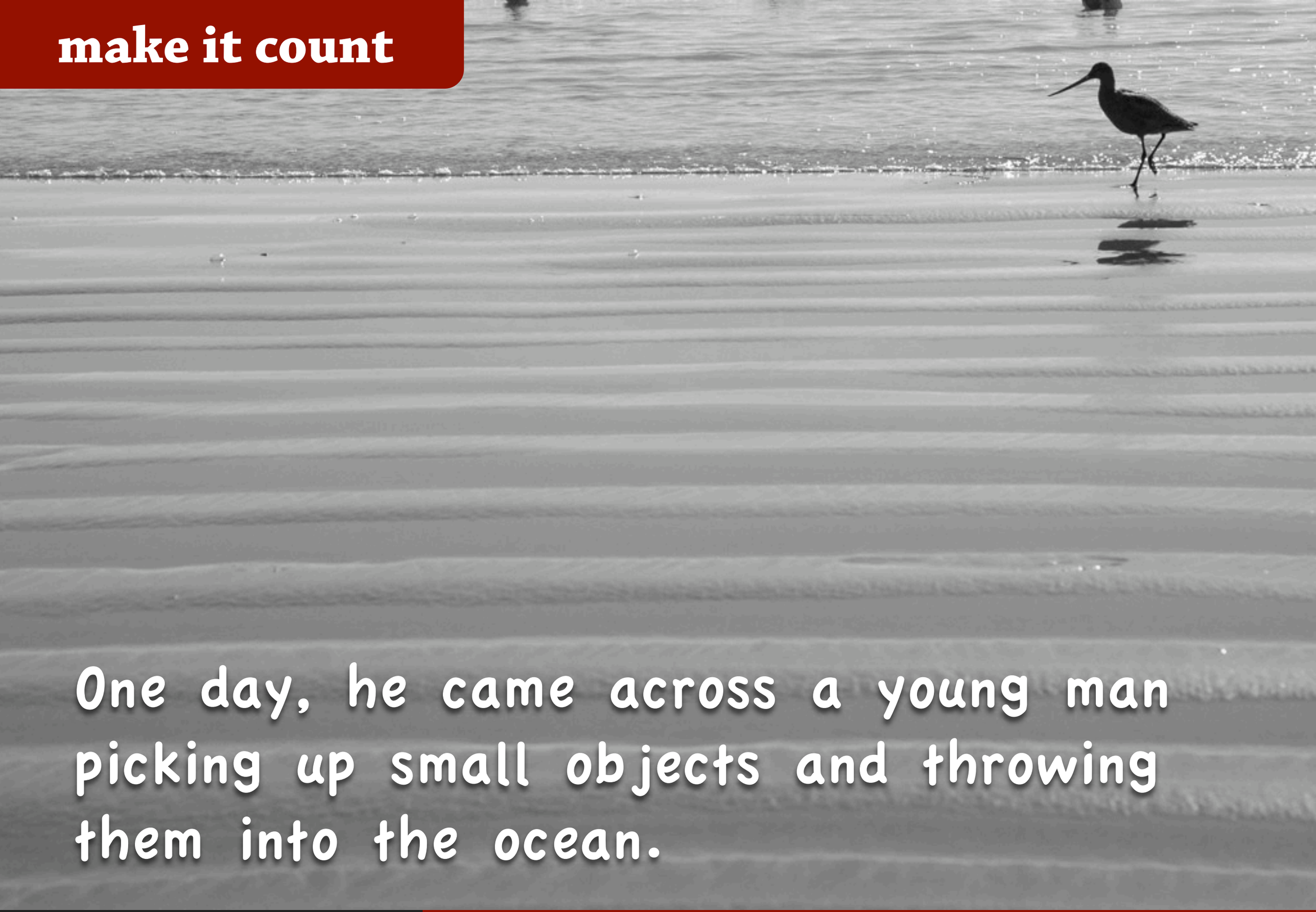
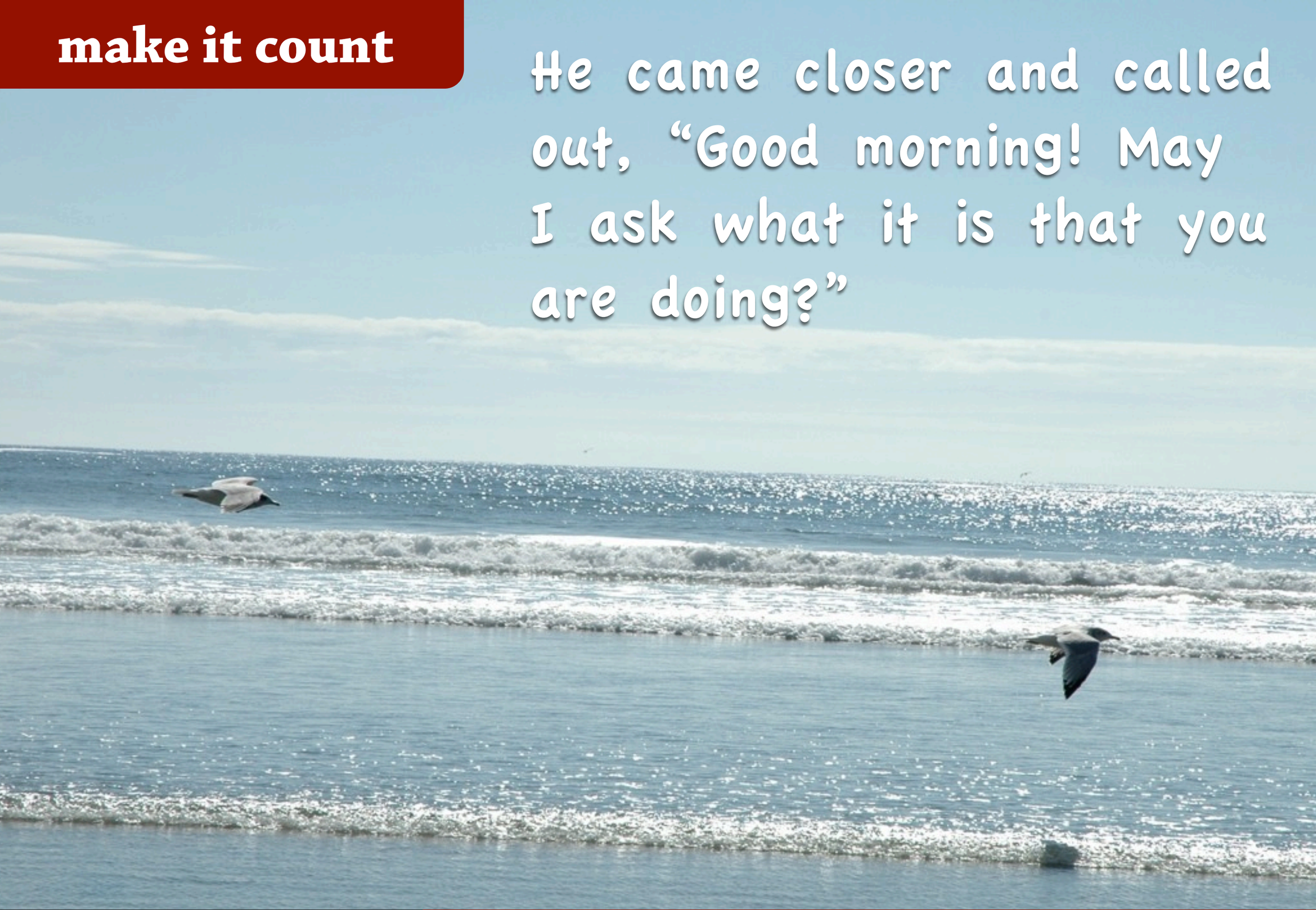


One day, he came across a young man picking up small objects and throwing them into the ocean.

He came closer and called out, “Good morning! May I ask what it is that you are doing?”



The young man paused, looked up, and replied, "Throwing starfish into the ocean. The sun is up and the tide is going out. If I don't throw them in, they'll die."

Puzzled,
the wise man said,
"But, young man,
there are miles and
miles of beach and
there are starfish
all along every mile.
You can't possibly
make a difference!"

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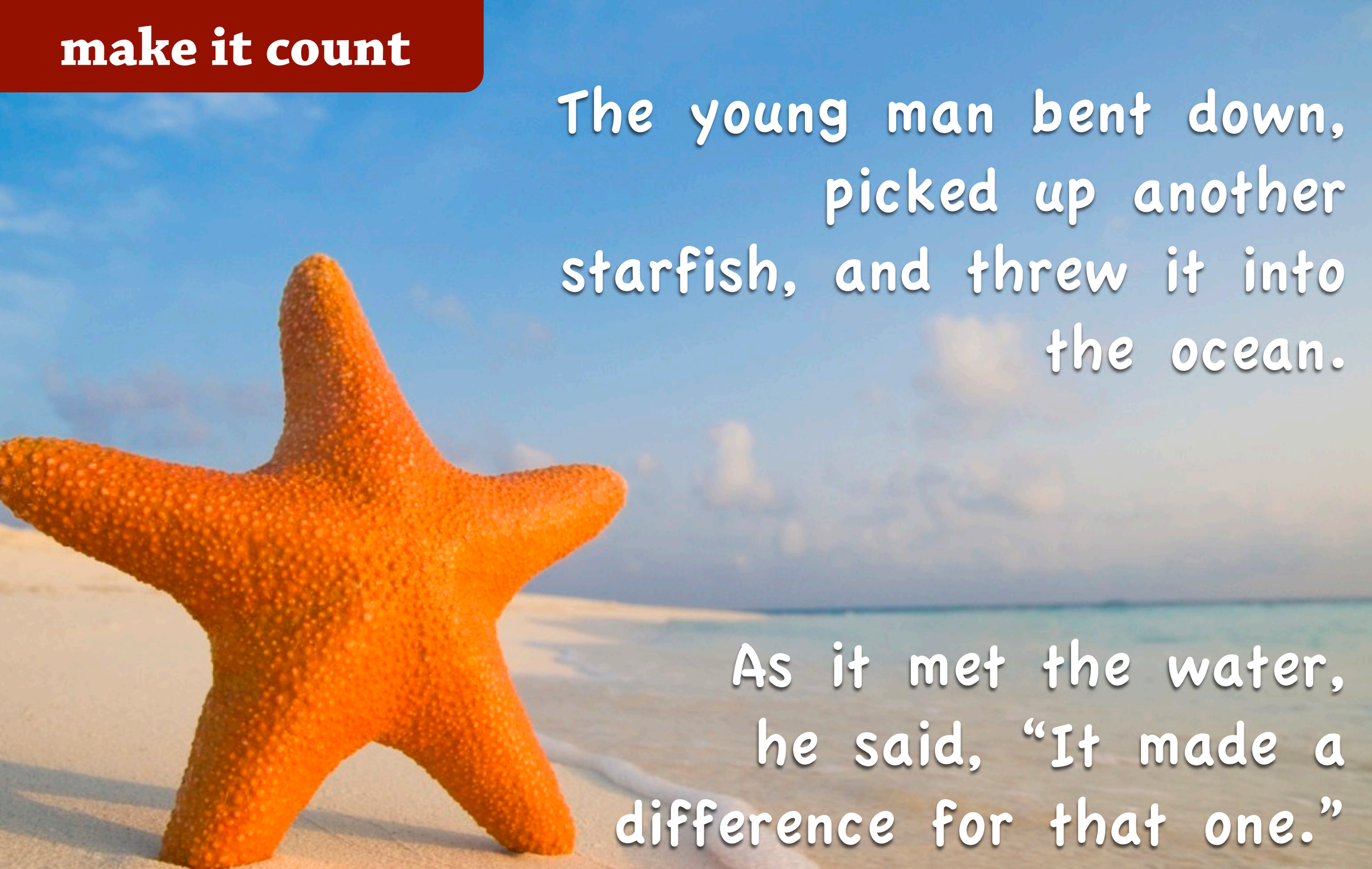

Adapted from The Star Thrower by Loren Eiseley (1907-1977)

This story is usually used to show the difference that just one person can make. And it does make that point well.

But we can draw another lesson from it:

The young man is able to stay fully committed to his work because he's able to see with his own eyes the impact he's making.

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We all want to see PROOF that our work makes a difference, however small. Funders and donors want to see it, volunteers want to see it, and WE – changemakers - want to see it.
We want to know that all the time and effort we put into our project pay off.

That's why it's important that we

measure outcome.

Measuring outcome involves asking
one main question:

What difference are you making to the beneficiary of your cause?

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If you're trying to help the environment, how is it different because of your work?

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If you're helping people, how are they better off?

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Outcome ISN'T

amount of money you raise for education

Outcome IS

number of students you put through school

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Outcome ISN'T

number of recycling bins you put on the streets

Outcome IS

number of plastic bottles you recycle

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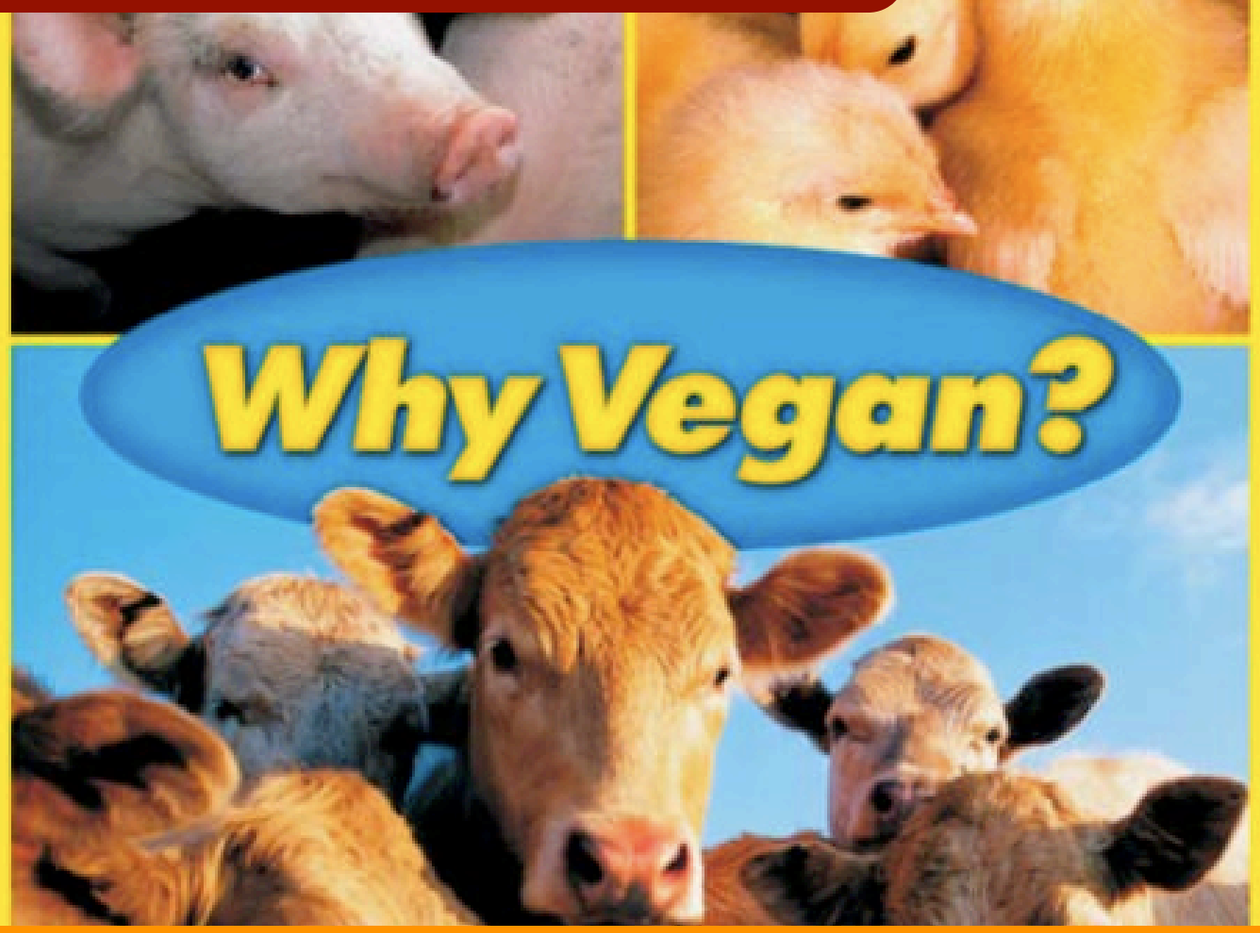

Outcome ISN'T

number of vegan pamphlets you pass out

Outcome IS

number of people who become vegans

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COMMISSION

gnez notre pétition pour des services publics de qualité, accessibles à tous

LE, REVENDIQUONS DES SERVICES PUBLICS AU SERVICE
OYEN(NE)S ET DEMANDONS À LA COMMISSION EUROPÉENNE
POSER UNE LEGISLATION EUROPÉENNE.

	E-MAIL / CONTACT	SIGNATURE

Outcome ISN'T

number of signatures you get for a petition

Outcome IS

getting a critical legislation passed

As you can see, some outcomes are easier to measure than others and some are quicker to realize than others.

Outcome measurement is especially challenging with **advocacy**, **awareness**, and **prevention** campaigns because the results are usually not immediate or visible to you.

That doesn't mean you shouldn't launch such campaigns.
But you might consider including activities that have more immediate outcomes.

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So, how do you MEASURE OUTCOME?

Measuring outcome is as much art as it is science. There is no absolute right way. But you can start by answering three basic questions:

- **Who or what am I trying to help?**
- **How do I want things to be different for the beneficiary?**
- **What indicator or data would tell me if things are different?**

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For example...

Who or what am I trying to help?	How do I want things to be different for the beneficiary?	What indicators or data would tell me if things are different?
Teen smokers	**Quit Smoking**	Number of teens who quit
Environment	**Free from electronic waste**	tons of e-waste recycled
AIDS orphans	**Able to go to school**	Number enrolled in school; number of graduates
African villages	**Have clean water supply**	Number of wells dug, people using wells, cases of water-related diseases

Now it's your turn. A few suggestions...

- Try to come up with more than one outcome measurement.

- Think of outcomes that are short, medium and long term.

- When helping people, outcome can include new knowledge and skills (short term), new behavior (medium term), new values and status (long term).

Your turn...

Who or what am I trying to help?	How do I want things to be different for the beneficiary?	What indicators or data would tell me if things are different?

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Now that you have your indicators, show them to others to get feedback.

Once you're satisfied you have good indicators, use them to...

- ✓ set goals
- ✓ collect the data you need
- ✓ report them to funders and supporters

Some final thoughts...

"If you can't measure it,
you can't manage it.

If you can't manage it,
you can't deliver it.

If you can't deliver it,
you have no social value."

David Hunter
Nonprofit management consultant

"How is the world different because you are here?"

Bill Drayton
Founder, Ashoka

Additional Resources:

- Basic Guide to Outcomes-Based Evaluation by Carter McNamara
- Outcome Measurement Resource Network (United Way)
- Outcome-based Evaluation (University of Oregon)

Check out other chapters...

and the six habits of highly effective social entrepreneurs.

about the author

Charles Tsai is the founder and Executive Director of Social Creatives. Previously, he worked for Ashoka's Youth Venture as Director of Virtual Program and at CNN as a reporter and producer. www.charlestsai.com

creative activist toolkit

The *Creative Activist Toolkit* is a series of PDF booklets designed to help today's youth impact the world through creativity and social entrepreneurship. Produced by Social Creatives and the Creative Visions Foundation, the toolkit chapters are offered free to download. Email us if you would like to contribute a chapter.

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thanks

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Charles Tsai is a journalist, writer, speaker and consultant for social entrepreneurs. A former reporter and producer for CNN, Charles ventured into the social sector to help youth design and implement their own solutions for change. He then helped Ashoka launch its first global campaigns to support youth-led social ventures.

Now, he has launched SOCIAL Creatives, a new framework to learn, teach and practice social entrepreneurship.

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