

How to be kind for health and happiness

We learn as children that kindness is a desirable quality and consciously, as adults, the majority of us want to be compassionate. We want to be a considerate friend, neighbour, employee or boss.

“A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in.” - Greek Proverb.

This is a beautiful proverb. Apply it to human kindness and you can see how a society would flourish with acts of kindness at its core.

Why is self-kindness important?

To treat yourself with kindness means to accept yourself and all your faults; to understand that none of us are perfect though we often have very high, sometimes unattainable expectations; to be gentle, warm and supportive and not harshly judge when mistakes are made.

Making a mistake does not mean we are not worthy, it makes us human. We are all deserving of care and understanding.

There has been much research to show that when we practice self-kindness we are more connected to those around us, we feel happier and less stressed.

Without the voice of self-criticism holding us back we are likely to be more productive and successful. We build our resilience and are more likely to bounce back from perceived failure.

How can we practice self-kindness?

- A daily mantra

Create a personal motivating statement, a mantra, to remind yourself that you are worthy of care. For example, “I am good at what I do”, “I am enough”, “I am doing my best”;

- Notice our negative stories

We all have negative stories that repeat in our minds. Our inner critic telling us we are stupid, unlikeable and shameful. These are our deepest fears, created by ourselves during our journey to adulthood. If we choose to take a step back and simply notice the inner critic, without trying to change anything or shut down our feelings, we can begin the process of separating these embedded fears from our reality. We have the power to rewrite our stories.

- A self-care programme

Be kind to your mind and your body. Eat a nourishing and well-balanced diet; spend time outdoors in nature; take regular exercise; meditate; engage with friends and family; listen to music; read a book; dance; laugh. These are not treats, regular self-care is essential for your health and wellbeing.

A happy workforce

Shawn Achor, author of *‘The Happiness Advantage’* argues that happiness brings success, reversing the age old formula, on the basis that your brain works more effectively and creatively when you are feeling happy. [Warwick University research](#) also links happiness with an increase in productivity.

To create a happier workforce and effectively invest in employee support and satisfaction, communication is key. Engage with and listen to your workforce. Co-create a wellbeing programme that meets their actual needs.

A successful wellbeing programme must start from the top down, with employers who accept and understand the benefits.

Step by step, we move towards kindness and compassion, planting trees for generations to come.