

WHAT WORD COMES TO YOUR MIND?

Look at the partial word below. Notice the first word, thought, image, memory or feeling that arrives before you try to solve it.

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What came to mind first?

What might your response be telling you about what matters today?

NOW REVEAL THE WORD

KINDNESS

Kindness can be something we offer easily to other people yet struggle to extend towards ourselves. It can also become complicated when being kind is confused with always agreeing, always helping or ignoring our own needs.

This reflection explores kindness as warmth, respect and thoughtful action - including the boundaries that stop kindness becoming self-neglect.

HOW DO YOU EXPERIENCE KINDNESS?

Kindness is not one fixed behaviour. What feels supportive to one person may feel intrusive to another. Genuine kindness pays attention to context, consent, needs and the individual in front of us.

A time somebody's kindness genuinely helped me was...

The kind of kindness I find easiest to receive is...

I find it difficult to accept kindness when...

When I need kindness from myself, I usually...

Kindness is not people-pleasing

Saying yes to everything is not the same as kindness. You can care about somebody and still say no. You can be understanding without accepting harmful behaviour. You can offer support without becoming responsible for solving another person's life.

Kindness and boundaries can work together

A respectful boundary can be kind because it makes relationships clearer and more sustainable. Consider whether your kindness includes yourself, or whether your own needs repeatedly disappear from the picture.

PUTTING KINDNESS INTO PRACTICE

Small acts can matter because they are specific and achievable. Choose actions that fit your energy, circumstances and values rather than creating another standard you must meet perfectly.

One small act of kindness I could offer somebody else:

One small act of kindness I could offer myself:

A kind boundary I may need to communicate:

Words I need to hear when I am struggling:

Something kind I already do but rarely acknowledge:

A kindness experiment

For one week, notice one act of kindness each day. It can be something you give, receive or witness. Do not turn it into a performance target. The purpose is simply to train attention towards moments of care that can otherwise pass unnoticed.

When self-kindness feels uncomfortable

If a supportive response feels false or embarrassing, start smaller. Instead of forcing yourself to say something highly positive, try something believable: 'This is difficult.' 'I am doing what I can with the capacity I have today.' 'I can respond without attacking myself.'

A MESSAGE FROM MAGGIE

Kindness is often described as something soft, but I think it can also require courage. Sometimes kindness is sitting beside somebody when there are no perfect words. Sometimes it is checking in. Sometimes it is saying no because continuing to say yes is hurting you.

We can become very skilled at understanding everybody else's circumstances while speaking to ourselves in a way we would never speak to another person. Self-kindness does not mean avoiding responsibility. It means trying to respond to ourselves without adding unnecessary shame or cruelty.

I would like this exercise to help you notice the kindness already around you as well as the places where you might want more of it. That includes kindness towards yourself.

You do not have to change the world in one enormous gesture. A thoughtful sentence, a boundary, a moment of patience or a small act of care can matter.

Maggie Learoyd MNCPS - Space to Breathe Therapy

THERAPEUTIC CONTEXT & FURTHER READING

Person-centred practice emphasises empathy, acceptance and authentic relationship. Compassion-focused approaches explore how threat, shame and self-criticism can make a supportive inner response difficult, while ACT can help connect everyday actions with personally meaningful values.

Suggested reading: Carl R. Rogers, *On Becoming a Person*; Paul Gilbert, *The Compassionate Mind*; Kristin Neff, *Self-Compassion*; Russ Harris, *The Happiness Trap*.

This resource is for reflection and psychoeducation and is not a diagnostic tool or a substitute for individual medical or mental-health care.