



These are extracts from a guide that The Mental Health Foundation has written to show the positive impact helping others can have on your own mental health and some tips and suggestions to inspire you. They are suggesting that we all try to help others once a day for a week and see if it makes a difference to how we feel. More information can be found at <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/campaigns/mental-health-awareness-week/>.

## What do we mean by kindness?

Kindness is choosing to do something that helps others or yourself, motivated by genuine warm feelings.

There are so many ways to help others as part of our everyday lives. Good deeds needn't take much time or cost any money.

### **Small changes can make a big difference.**

We all have so much going on in our lives - including competing strains and stresses - not to mention the current coronavirus pandemic. This can see kindness pushed to one side, in favour of what is urgent or trending now.

It can be easy to signal kindness by posting online and following a trend, but harder to commit to kindness in our daily words and actions.

But if we take the time to be kind to other people, we can reap the emotional dividends. It can really make a difference and especially for people who are vulnerable or struggling.

### **Things you can do:**

#### **At home and in your community**

- Call a friend who you haven't spoken to for a while
- Post a card or letter to someone you are out of touch with
- Send flowers to a friend, out of the blue
- Find out if a neighbour needs any help with shopping
- Ring someone who is on their own, or video call them
- Send someone a handwritten thank you note
- Tell your family how much you love and appreciate them
- Help with household chores
- Offer to help an elderly or vulnerable neighbour
- Check on someone you know who is going through a tough time

### At work

- Remember to say hi to colleagues and ask how they are – whether that's face-to-face, or virtually if you are working from home
- Offer to support colleagues who may not be familiar with videoconferencing or new software that you have already used
- Set up a virtual coffee/lunch club – with your regular colleagues and with new ones
- Have a conversation with a colleague you don't normally talk to
- Get to know a new member of staff – it is hard to join a new workplace under these restrictions
- Lend your ear – listen to your colleague who is having a bad day
- Say thank you to a colleague who has helped you
- Praise a colleague for something they have done well

### In public places

- Follow the rules on social isolation – but don't make negative assumptions about others
- Wish a passer-by a good morning or afternoon from an appropriate distance (2 metres or more)
- Be a considerate cyclist/driver
- Pick up some rubbish lying around in the street
- Smile and say hello to people you may pass every day, but have never spoken to before from an appropriate distance (2 metres or more)

### On social media

- Take time to reach out online to people you haven't seen for a while
- Write something nice or encouraging on a post you appreciate
- Acknowledge and validate someone's story – if they are having a difficult time you don't have to have all the answers, sometimes a like or a brief 'I'm sorry to hear this, is there something I can do?' is enough to make them feel heard

## It's important to be kind to yourself as well

Whatever you can manage today is good enough. Some people feel that the lockdown is giving them the time and chance to learn new skills or try new things. That may be you, and if so, enjoy and celebrate that.

If this isn't you, try not to beat yourself up about what you see others doing. If things are hard right now, try and find some small things to celebrate each day. Getting up and washing your hair can be just as much of an achievement as someone else posting about a 5k run on Instagram.