

# It's Possible with Kindness

I find myself reflecting on kindness often. I continue to be inspired by those who give it unconditionally and now pass this on to my children as they grow in an ever-changing world.

What is it about kindness that can make a difference to one? We all talk about being kind; but what does that mean? So, I looked it up and found the below definition.

**Definition of Kindness:** *The quality of being friendly, generous & considerate.*

But is it possible that true kindness means so much more? And why does kindness matter?

It's possible that kindness is a movement, that it is contagious and does have the ability to impact one's life in ways that the kindness giver couldn't foresee. A concept I recently read said that *"kindness is a chain reaction, it's a wave that keeps rolling and all it needs is one person to start it"*. In the healthcare space, its common knowledge that healthcare professionals choose this vocation because of their natural desire to help and support others. We also know that particularly in locum roles there are unique challenges with travelling around the country and supporting leave and staffing needs. Locum nurses can be the "new kids on the block" 20 times a year depending on their work life requirements. Is it kindness and understanding that supports their resilience?

I needed to know more, so my team reached out to our valued locum nursing staff to identify if they had examples of kindness in the workplace and there were a significant number of stories to draw upon.

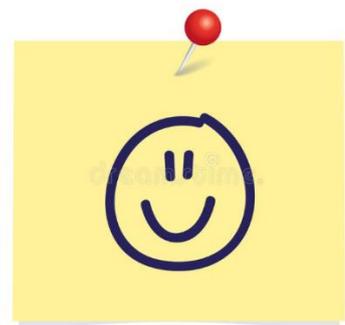


Support worker Ree tells the most beautiful story of how she was working in an outback aged care facility. With the COVID restrictions, the female residents had not had a hairdresser into the facility for some time. Maybe not a big deal to most, however Ree could see that this was affecting the "ladies" (as she calls them) self-esteem. They enjoy the weekly contact of primping and preening and allows them an opportunity feel good about themselves. So, "Super Ree" to the rescue... Ree goes about setting hair curlers, washing and drying hair and being a Jill of all trades. Ree did more for her residents than she will ever know, and I find that inspiring.

For Anzac Day this year, RN Rachel and a colleague made batches of Anzac cookies and dressed up individual bags with ribbons and bows. Being remote they had to be creative with their decorations due to lack of supplies in the bush. That's ok, some crepe paper left over from a farewell party make gorgeous bows in case anyone wants to know. Ok, I digress, back to the cookies. These homemade treats were gifts for health staff and clients that day. Rachel tells us she is inspired by her mum who set a wonderful example in the kindness space – This must be the chain reaction I've heard about.



I was fortunate to present at aged care conference in the NT earlier this year. I remember talking with a facility manager of an NT Remote aged & community services site who employs local indigenous support workers within that region. She uses a smiley face system and a chocolate as a thank you to her staff who go above and beyond for their community members. She describes the smile and contagious giggle those support workers would have once finding the smiley face and chocolate on their desk.



It makes me smile as I picture it. There is something endearing about chocolate and kindness that just speaks to people. Maybe, it's the small gesture with big impact that makes people feel good; we pass along hope and promote peace.

One of our clinical colleagues working in a COVID hotspot shared this example on her social media, she was working a shift in a hotel, COVID swabbing travellers. She came across a beautifully decorated handwritten coloured poster on one door that said, *"Thank you for looking after me, have a wonderful day"*. This small gesture of kindness made that nurses day!

RN Jen has worked with HCA for more than 11 years. I'll never forget when I first met Jen, she had recently applied to join our team and had supplied all the necessary paperwork for onboard. We had a new administrator who had also joined the Darwin team this same week and I had given said colleague the task of scanning in all Jen's documents for her file. It was shortly identified days later that there had been a technical issue with new colleague and scanner and none of the scanning had worked and alas Jen's docs had all been shredded.



It was with an increased heart rate and some anxiety that I picked up the phone to Jen to inform her of the news that she would need to re-submit all her paperwork again *<insert sad face and a face smack emoji here>*. I'm sure you would agree that this is never a great way to commence a new business relationship. The good news is that of course Jen understood and appreciated the honesty. I remember her telling me that it was Ok. Whilst she was disappointed her point of view was logical. *"Everyone starts as new and learns from their mistakes"* she said. We recently sent Jen a small token of appreciation for her hard work in remote during what I refer to as the "COVID Crazy" period. She sent an email into her consultant saying: *"Working remote is what it is. Love the work & support I get from HCA. Hence being with you for 11+ years. Big thank you to you all. A present isn't necessary for me, but love it anyway xx"*

It is typical to gravitate to positive and kind people therefore attempting to avoid negative or those who we perceive as unkind. I guess it is expected isn't it. Considering the impact that we know kindness can have, maybe the saying "Be Kind to unkind people (they need it the most)" is worth our time and response. In avoiding unkind people, it's possible we are holding up the "kindness train" slowing down this chain reaction. The result of this avoidance could

be that the kind will continue to be kind thus the unkind will remain unkind.

When you are out on your next HCA Adventure and come across someone who may not outwardly project positivity and kindness for whatever reason this could be your opportunity to evoke your very own "chain reaction". Our reservoir of kindness will not be depleted, we will not get bored of giving it and we won't tire of receiving it.

***As the captains of our own "kindness train", we say: "All Aboard."***

Kind Regards,

***Danni***

*HCA Rural & Remote*

