



Blair Wellness



It's Time to Stop JUST Being Nice!

Ever get so hung up on being nice that you forget to think about what you need or struggle to tell people how you *really* feel? This one's for you!

It's not uncommon to hear about mean behavior in the counseling office. Sometimes it's the person being unkind to themselves, being unkind to others, or someone is being unkind to them. We can't always speak to the reasoning or intentions behind it with certainty, but we can speak to the impact. Think about a time you were hard on yourself or labeled yourself as "bad" or "not good enough." Think about a time that someone intentionally did something to hurt you. How did you react? What were you thinking and feeling? How did the people around you react? People carry feelings of sadness, shame, embarrassment, loneliness and even numbness or a disconnection with the world around them after experiences like this. These emotions spill out in other ways- it becomes toxic to the person and to the community.



Take on the Challenge!

We could all use more kindness these days! Do you want to show others more kindness but not sure where to start? Check out [this kindness challenge](#) for ideas!



Talk it out like Jeremy & Gavin!

Struggle to express yourself in kind ways when you're frustrated? [Here are some tips](#) to help you communicate better with others.

We've all grown up hearing messages about the importance of being "nice", and I'd argue that is one of our struggles as a society. Don't get me wrong, niceness isn't all bad but what do we actually mean when we say "be nice"? The messages we get are often attached to behavior that we *shouldn't* be engaging in- like, "Don't take his toy. Be nice." As a mom, I'm guilty of it myself! When this is the consistent message, we start to believe that pleasing others or suppressing our feelings are the way to deal with people and uncomfortable emotions. When we're just focused on being nice, we tend to do things like tell others what we think they want to hear or commit to responsibilities we don't have the time or capacity for without personal consequence. We avoid uncomfortable conversations that could lead to more meaningful relationships- all for the sake of "not upsetting" anyone. We might even act one way in person and another way on social media platforms, for instance.

It sounds a bit cliché to say that kindness is the way to solve all of these problems, but it's a mindset that really can shift how we feel about ourselves and others. It takes effort, sincerity, and compassion. If we take the social media example- it's easy to feel annoyed with someone and post about it rather than have a conversation. It's also easy to jump in with a "funny" comment rather than pausing and really thinking about how that comment might make someone feel OR what it might feel like if they were talking about YOU. If we're really thinking about others and ourselves, we'll do the work to be kind rather than the bare minimum to be nice (at least to their face).

This is no easy shift though, this newsletter is going to give you a deeper look at kindness. We're also going to hear from Brad Allen, Mrs. Evans, and Be Well.

in my opinion. I am a firm believer that if I do good things, good things will come in return. So, I make sure to show kindness all across campus. Sometimes kindness comes in the form of something simple, such as a friendly wave or smile to brighten someone's day. The small things matter, so the next time you're contemplating that small gesture, don't be afraid to do it. Holding open a door, sharing a good laugh, and complimenting others are all ways to show kindness on campus. Other times, I like to show kindness by asking a teacher or student how their day has been, and then have insightful conversations that stem from that one question.

In my own words, kindness is being generous, friendly, and considerate. Being kind helps everyone feel seen and included. If students feel good about themselves they can build confidence and spread kindness to even more people. Acting with kindness creates a ripple effect across campus and is a great way to showcase consideration for others. Kindness also can encourage people to change their perspectives. Kindness is about empathy, not judging others, and looking to understand and learn from others' perspectives versus thinking only of one's self or thinking of one's self first.

What does it mean to be kind?

By Brad Allen

I go about my day trying to be the best person I can possibly be. Something I admire in myself is how I can look on the bright side of things even if the situation is not that bright. Being positive ties right into kindness

Nice



- Polite with everyone. Others feel good about them.
- Focuses on how one is perceived
- Afraid to speak up in unpleasant situations.
- Can increase stress levels

Kind



- Genuinely cares about people. Doesn't show off.
- Upholds boundaries and shows care
- Always puts forth their views & takes a stand.
- Act of kindness produces oxytocin & it helps in decreasing blood pressure.

Why is kindness a better choice?



Makes you feel good



Helps to deal with anxiety



It is contagious



Helps form new bonds



Reduces stress

Boundaries, Boundaries, Boundaries!!!

We hear this ALL the time...but what does it actually mean and how do we actually "do" it!?

Well HOPEFULLY you have a better understanding of this term after the last "How to Be Well @ Blair" session on Effective Communication. But just in case you forgot or didn't quite catch it, BE WELL is here to remind you!

Personal boundaries are limits and rules that YOU set for YOURSELF to feel most comfortable within a relationship (and by "relationship" we mean a friendship, family relationships, romantic relationships, relationships with colleagues or acquaintances).

Why is setting boundaries SOOOO important?

- Boundaries are crucial for effective communication
- Boundaries help prevent/resolve problems
- Boundaries help make sure your wants and needs are met
- Boundaries help to maintain positive relationships

Not sure how or what to say? Try starting with one of these phrases:

- It bothers me when...
- I don't feel comfortable when...
- I'm frustrated because...
- I need some time to think about it.
- I feel _____ when you _____ (ex. I feel annoyed when you take my snacks when you don't ask me beforehand)
- Next time, can you please...

YES, we know this can sometimes feel uncomfortable but often people don't know what is and isn't okay until we communicate with them- it's the kind thing to do!

Say NO! More

Struggling to get the word "no" out of your mouth? Here are some tips to help:

1. **Say Less!**- A simple "I can't this time" is a great way to say no. Over-explaining yourself leaves more room for others to question your choice and potentially guilt you. A simple "I can't" is enough of a reason for someone to respect your boundaries.
2. **Give yourself time to think!**- Not sure if you want to commit? Make sure your response buys you more time. Try "Let me think about it, I'll get back to you."
3. **Stay committed to plans you've made with yourself!**- Many of us buy into this idea that a commitment to ourselves isn't really "having plans." We feel differently- Want to go on a run? Plan to take time to read that book you've been excited about all day? Just need time to REST?! The commitment to yourself is important and it's okay to say "I have plans."
4. **Make it a policy!**- "Sorry, I don't lend my air pods out to anyone" or "It's a rule for me that I don't go out with my friend's ex."
5. **Keep in mind what you want to say yes to!**- You know you don't want commit to two tours in one day, or give that school announcement, or babysit after a long day BUT do you know what you do want to say yes to? Every time you say no to a request, remember your saying yes to something else! Hang out with your friends, eat a meal, get that assignment done, REST. The more time you give to things you care about and truly need, the more satisfied and fulfilled you'll feel.

Still nervous? Try saying "no" anyway. Most people are going to respect your boundaries. The ones who don't are more focused on themselves (*really* it has nothing to do with you). It doesn't mean that won't be a hard interaction, but in the end you'll be happy you choose to say no!

Modified tips from Connie Hatch, co-author of the book *How to Say No Without Feeling Guilty*.

Thoughts from Mrs. Evans



"Kindness is like snow—it beautifies everything it covers."

~Kahlil Gibran

Have you ever seen those bumper stickers that say "Practice Random Acts of Kindness"? They always made me wonder why one "practiced" being kind. Can't one just be kind? Of course, we can. But like most habits, kindness can become part of our daily routines and second nature. The more we try to be kind, the easier it becomes.

What's the difference between being nice and being kind? When I googled this question recently, the most succinct answer to come up was

"Nice" is defined as "pleasing; agreeable; delightful", while "kind" is defined as "having, showing, or proceeding from benevolence." This difference seems to explain why we use "nice" but not "kind" to describe things besides people and the way they treat each other.

There is no being a kind person without small, seemingly minor interactions full of warmth and generosity. Kindness comes from the heart and requires paying attention to those around you who might benefit from your empathy or generosity. Your best friend may need cheering up after receiving a bad grade or breaking up with a significant other. Your teammate may be sad about losing a game. Your teacher may be frustrated with a class. Your mom or dad might have had a bad day at work. What act of kindness could you perform to make them feel better? Make them laugh? Offer to take a walk and talk to make them feel better. Bring them a cookie to cheer them up? (One of my personal favorites). Make dinner or do the dishes without being asked?

Kindness can also be making the choice to "do the kind thing" instead of the mean thing. Ask yourself before you speak, is this comment going to be hurtful or helpful. Words can be "kindful" and well as "hurtful"; it is just as easy to make someone feel

better as it is to hurt someone's feelings.

In the film *Groundhog's Day*, Bill Murray is doomed to repeat one day until he learns to live the day as the best person he can possibly be. He wakes up each Groundhog's Day destined to make the same mistakes until he figures out how to be the kindest version of himself. When he finally gets it right, he is able to see what others might need that he can give them to help them and make them happy. He literally practices being kind until he gets it right. His character changes from an egotistical, self-centered, and even sometimes cruel man to a thoughtful, sincere, and giving individual. Though we don't have the ability to go back and relive our days to make ourselves kinder, by starting with small gestures and thoughtful acts, we can become kinder and more empathetic people.

Being kind is also good for you—good for your physical and mental health and over-all well being. Don't believe me? [Check out this article](#) to see what it can do for YOU!

Reflections

We kicked off Black History Month with the words of S.C. SAYS. His message was about empathy, an act foundational to kindness. If you haven't already, we'd like to encourage you to take a moment to reflect on his words. Here are some questions for thought:



- ▶ What did his message make you feel?
- ▶ Think of a time you were shown empathy- how did that impact you?
- ▶ Could you relate to his story in the poem '[A Kindness](#)' (we've included a link here in case you'd like to read it)? What is the story that comes to mind? How does it make you feel when you remember that moment?
- ▶ How will you practice empathy moving forward?

What to do in unkind situations...

If it was done TO you:

1. Consider whether the person is aware of what they've done or how they've pushed one of your boundaries.
2. Reinforce your boundary by communicating your preferences and let them know how their words/ actions made you feel.
3. Take space from the relationship if they dismiss your feelings or continue to cross your boundaries even after you've addressed it with them.

If it was done BY you:

1. Talk through what happened. Listen to what the other person is telling you about your words/ actions.
2. Invite the person to immediately and directly tell you if you cross a line again in the future.
3. Apologize, acknowledge how you made them feel, and do better moving forward. Respect that apologizing isn't always enough for people to forgive/ continue the relationship.

5 Kind things YOU can do today:

1. Check in on a friend, see how they're doing. It's easy to get caught up in our own stuff,
2. Invite someone new to sit with you at lunch or dinner.
3. Call a family member or friend just to tell them you were thinking about them.
4. Notice trash left on a table in the dining hall or chairs everywhere? Clean it up, push the chairs back in!
5. Do something nice for yourself- go on that run, listen to music, spend time with that friend, etc.

What does that voice in your head sound like?

Sometimes we are unkind to ourselves. Pay attention to your thoughts and challenge them! It takes practice but can make a HUGE difference in how you feel. Here are some examples to get you started:

Be kind to yourself today:

Sana Powell, M.A., LPC x @curly_therapist

✘ "I messed up again. I'm such a failure..."	→	✔ "Failure is a natural part of growth."
✘ "I can't do it. I'm just not good enough..."	→	✔ "I am enough. I will achieve my goals."
✘ "I should've achieved more by now..."	→	✔ "Life isn't a race. I'll go at my own pace."
✘ "No one cares about what I have to say..."	→	✔ "My voice matters. How I feel matters."
✘ "I can't believe I made another mistake..."	→	✔ "My mistakes don't define who I am."
✘ "I'll never be able to recover from this..."	→	✔ "In time, I will heal and grow from this."

Need some support?

Reach out to us! We want to support you. Stop by or email us at:

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