

## THE BENEFITS OF KINDNESS IN THE HEALTHCARE WORKPLACE

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### AGENDA

- Introductions
- 'Kindness' and kind leadership
- Kindness begins with self-kindness
- Some ways to be kind at work
- The effects of kindness on humans
- The effects of kindness on workplaces
- Incivility in the workplace
- Kindness at work strategies
- Take-home messages

### INTRODUCTIONS

A bit about me

- Certified Life, Leadership and Executive Coach
- Special interest in WPB and kind leadership
- Coach and train on these areas for NHS organisations
- Former medical leader (ex-Med Director and LMC VC)
- Called to the Bar 2014
- Doctor (q. 2000)
- Podcast launched 6 wks ago!

Over to you 🙌

### 'KINDNESS'

*"The quality of being friendly, generous and considerate"*  
Oxford English Dictionary

### 'KIND LEADERSHIP'

#### 1. Compassionate leadership

*Compassionate leadership consists of treating those you lead with compassion in all situations and creating a culture of compassion that supports the flourishing of everyone within that culture.*

#### 2. Servant leadership

*Servant leadership is a form of moral-based leadership where leaders tend to prioritise the fulfillment of the needs of followers, namely employees, customers and other stakeholders, rather than satisfying their personal needs.*

### 'KIND LEADERSHIP'

#### 3. Inclusive leadership

*Inclusive leadership is a kind of leadership that values team members, invites diverse perspectives, and creates an atmosphere where people feel their opinions and contributions improve the company's well-being.*

**For me, kind leadership is a hybrid of the above three paradigms.**

## KINDNESS BEGINS WITH 'SELF-KINDNESS'

*"To love oneself is the beginning of a life-long romance."*  
Oscar Wilde

**Self-kindness** refers to acting in kind and understanding ways towards ourselves e.g. instead of being self-critical ("I'm so disorganised! I'll never be successful"), our inner voice is supportive and warm ("It's OK that I missed the deadline – I worked hard and I'll make it next time").

**Does anyone here berate themselves fairly often?**

## SOME WAYS TO BE KIND AT WORK

*"Employers could support (not just in words but in actions such as protected time and salary support) employees to develop skills to promote health and wellbeing. That would be a great start."*

**Dr DD, Orthopaedic Surgeon**

*"I give something sweet (chocolate) when I see someone stressed or concerned, as a way to start a conversation and offer help..."*

**Dr MZ, Physician**

## SOME WAYS TO BE KIND AT WORK

*"I like to randomly make a colleague a hot drink if I know they've been flat out busy or on numerous phone appointments, or first thing when we get in depending on where I'm working. Just a cup of tea that appears and is left on their desk for when they look up."*

*This week I got a chocolate bar for reception staff that had helped me out with obtaining some notes and after a member of the public had been particularly rude and unpleasant to her. Hopefully it was a little bright chocolatey spot in her morning."*

**MB, Audiologist**

## SOME WAYS TO BE KIND AT WORK

*"If I got the sense someone wasn't ok, I would ask and stop to listen, offer the space to talk further if needed."*

*After evening surgery, if I was leaving at the same time as someone else who was either going to walk home/use public transport and going in the same direction as myself, I would always offer to give them a lift (the area I worked in was pretty dodgy, especially after sundown)." Dr NA, GP*

## SOME WAYS TO BE KIND AT WORK

*"Being attentive to birthdays and anniversaries by gifts, cards or words of affirmation is very important in nurturing respect as well as a sustained connection."* **Dr GN, Physician**

*"When I ask a colleague "how are you?" I stop what I'm doing and wait for the answer, so that they know I'm genuinely interested in their wellbeing. This small act does get me a lot of love though, so I feel like I'm the one benefitting!"*

**Dr PM, Medical Leader**

## SOME WAYS TO BE KIND AT WORK

*"Being kind, and honouring my needs and boundaries, helps me show kindness to others - from words of appreciation and affirmation to random acts of service or treats. I love being able to be my best self, so I can elevate others by doing the same."*

*We all seek to be seen, heard, understood, and cared for. Moreover, it enriches us to reciprocate by seeing, listening, and caring with the same attention. By spreading that energy, we heal from within, so we can all heal others better."* **Dr JW, Physician**

### THE EFFECTS OF (SELF-) KINDNESS ON HUMANS

- Increases lifespan
- Lowers blood pressure
- Lessens the physical effects of stress e.g. diabetes
- Improves immunity and reduces inflammation
- Gives similar gains to having a healthy diet
- Releases happy hormones / neurochemicals
- Reduces the incidence of mental illness e.g. anxiety

### THE EFFECTS OF KINDNESS ON THE WORKPLACE

- Practising kindness is extremely beneficial to employees / colleagues.
- Being recognised at work helps reduce employee burnout and absenteeism, and improves employee well-being.
- Receiving a compliment, words of recognition, and praise, can all help individuals feel more fulfilled, boost their self-esteem, improve their self-evaluations and trigger positive emotions.
- Practising kindness helps life feel more meaningful e.g. through giving, caring for others, volunteering etc.

### THE EFFECTS OF KINDNESS ON THE WORKPLACE

- Giving compliments can make us even happier than receiving them.
- Giving compliments engenders a stronger social connection than receiving compliments because giving them encourages people to focus on the other person.
- Actively thinking about other people is often a precondition to feeling connected to them.
- When people receive an act of kindness, research shows they pay it back / forward, and not just to the same person, but often to someone entirely new.
- This leads to a culture of generosity in an organisation.

### THE EFFECTS OF KINDNESS ON THE WORKPLACE

- Higher rates of these behaviours are predictive of greater productivity and efficiency, and lower turnover / higher retention rates.
- When leaders and employees act kindly towards each other, they facilitate a culture of collaboration and innovation due to higher levels of trust and the associated feelings of psychological safety.

### INCIVILITY IN THE WORKPLACE

- 'Incivility' is defined in the OED as *"rude or unsociable speech or behaviour"*.
- In their seminal 2013 HBR paper, *'The Price of Incivility'*, Christine Porath and Christine Pearson documented the direct costs of rudeness, disrespect and outright hostility at work.
- They surveyed 800 managers and employees across 17 industries and found that when they were on the receiving end of incivility...

### INCIVILITY IN THE WORKPLACE

- 48% decreased their work effort
- 78% said their commitment to the organisation declined
- 25% admitted to taking out their frustration on customers
- And that is *just* from incivility at work, not even workplace bullying.
- It's also just the effect on the target, not taking into account the effect on any witnesses to the incivility.

### INCIVILITY IN THE WORKPLACE

- However, these direct impacts are the tip of the iceberg.
- If we work in an environment where we are coerced into behaving in a way that is inauthentic and not consistent with our true nature, over a prolonged period, it can place us at increased risk of developing mental illnesses.
- The full price of incivility is paid for through the loss of interpersonal and therefore collaborative working skills, a lack of innovation and a lack of imagination.

### KINDNESS AT WORK STRATEGIES

- Starts with self-kindness.
- On work days, it can begin before work, at home, on the commute to work etc.
- It starts from the top with kind leaders, leading by example and promoting kindness at work e.g. by giving compliments and praising the members of their teams, which is very motivating.
- Employees are influenced by their leaders' behaviour and model it, creating a domino effect, such that kindness becomes the norm in the workplace.

### KINDNESS AT WORK STRATEGIES

- Leaders can set aside just a few minutes a week during meetings for a 'kindness round' in which team members can acknowledge each other's work.
- Consider small 'spot bonuses'. Even £5 could have a positive effect; research has found that people appreciate small acts of kindness as much as large ones. A gift card / small gift sent through the post would work just as well.
- By actively supporting and advocating for women, veterans, LGBTQ+, specially-abled and ethnic employees, PayPal's award-winning 'Affinity Groups' programme facilitates bringing your authentic self to work.

### KINDNESS AT WORK STRATEGIES

*"It helps you feel as though as you belong within the organisation rather than having to change who you are in order to fit in."*

PayPal employee.

*"Do things for people not because of who they are or what they do in return, but because of who you are."*

Harold S. Kushner

### TAKE-HOME MESSAGES

1. Kindness begins with self-kindness.
2. There are lots of low-hanging kindness fruits at work.
3. Kindness to self and others is good for your health!
4. Practising kindness at work is extremely beneficial to employees / colleagues and hence the organisation.
5. Incivility in the workplace is bad for everyone!
6. Kind positive leadership is great for everyone!
7. Enabling authenticity through inclusion is also brilliant!
8. Adopting the above is really good for staff retention.

**Thank you so much for  
listening and for your time!**

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