

Kindness: A discussion

Suggested time: 30 - 60 minutes.

Below you will find information with discussion points on the topic of kindness in healthcare. In small groups allocate a facilitator to guide you through the material. You may choose to cover all or some of these points.

Kindness facilitates interpersonal interactions, team dynamics and policies. It creates the trust necessary to hold challenging conversations while maintaining relationships and creates psychologically safe working and learning environments (Judt, cited in Ballat et al., 2020). It does not mean taking the easy option or simply agreeing to every request.

Berry et al (2016) identifies the following points as necessary to kindness in healthcare:

Deep listening	Timely care that reduces stress and anxiety
Clear empathy	Gentle honesty in discussions and conversations
Generous acts of discretionary effort	Thoughtful support for families and carers

The importance of kindness has been recognised by the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP), the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) and the General Medical Council (GMC). Both the NMC Code and the GMC Good Medical Practice state that clinicians must treat patients with kindness whilst the RCGP require doctors to demonstrate that they treat patients with kindness and compassion (NMC 2015, GMC 2024, RCGP 2018).

Discussion point 1: Can you think of a time when kindness made a difference to the consultation? What was the impact on the patient and you as the clinician?

There is evidence to show that as people go through medical training they become less empathic (Mountford 2024).

Discussion point 2: Do you recognise this from your own training or experiences in training others?

When patients are treated with kindness, health inequalities are reduced and quality of care and clinician wellbeing are improved (Potter et al 2024, Voorhees et al. 2022). A range of measurable indicators improve, from medication adherence to patient satisfaction (Trzeciak & Mazzarelli, 2019).

Discussion point 3: Why might we, as clinicians, find it hard to be kind to patients?

Psychological safety is the freedom from interpersonal fear, feeling able to speak up, admit mistakes or lack of knowledge, without fear of repercussion (Edmonson 2018). When staff members are treated with kindness, psychological safety is improved and patient safety is increased. In the healthcare learning environment, it is the extent to which a learner feels able to ask questions, to admit what they don't know and to report errors.

*Discussion point 4: Do you feel comfortable reporting a mistake at work, or to admit you don't know something in a group of your colleagues?
Do you feel able to treat colleagues with kindness?*

When we treat others with kindness, it improves our own well-being and prevents burnout. However, we can only benefit from these effects when we are also kind to ourselves.

Discussion point 5: What does self kindness look like to you?

To learn more about kindness in healthcare, see 'Kindness Resources' on page 3.

References

- Ballatt, J., Campling, P., Maloney, C. (2020). *Intelligent kindness: Rehabilitating the welfare state* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Berry, L. L., Danaher, T. S., Chapman, R. A., & Awdish, R. L. A. (2017). Role of Kindness in Cancer Care. *Journal of oncology practice*, 13(11), 744–750. <https://doi.org/10.1200/JOP.2017.026195>
- Edmonson A.C. (2018) *The Fearless Organization: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth*. Wiley
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- Mountford, J (2024. April 8) In conversation with James Mountford for BMJ Leader <https://blogs.bmj.com/bmjleader/2024/04/08/in-conversation-with-james-mountford/>
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- Royal College of General Practitioners. (2018.) *The RCGP Curriculum: The Core Curriculum Statement*. https://www.gmc-uk.org/-/media/documents/RCGP_Curriculum_1_Being_a_GP_Jan2018.pdf_73517306.pdf
- Trzeciak, S., Mazzairelli, A. (2019) *Compassionomics: the revolutionary scientific evidence that caring makes a difference*. Studer Gr.

Kindness Resources

- www.kindnessinhealthcare.world
- [Health Inequalities - The Surprising Factor | Wessex LMCs Podcasts \(podbean.com\)](http://podbean.com)
- [Kindness in healthcare: why it matters and why BMJ Leader will focus on it](#)
- [leading-change-through-vision-values-and-behaviours-leaflet-2019-20.pdf \(imperial.nhs.uk\)](#)
- Ballatt, John; Campling, Penelope and Maloney, Chris **Intelligent kindness: rehabilitating the welfare state** *Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020*
- [Kindness, emotions and human relationships: The blind spot in public policy - Carnegie UK Trust](#)
- Berry Leonard L, Danaher Tracey S., Chapman Robert A. and, Awdish Rana L. A. <https://doi.org/10.1200/JOP.2017.026195>
- [Happier Kinder Together | Action for Happiness](#)