

How to Bring Kindness to the Workplace

Tips from Dr Nihara Krause, Clinical Psychologist & CEO/Founder of teenage mental health charity stem4, on International Week of Happiness at Work

LONDON, SEPTEMBER 2020: Kindness may not automatically be an activity associated with the workplace, but it is an important element to embed into the very ethos of a working culture. Kindness towards oneself enhances an individual's mental health and productivity, since self-criticism and judgement will often decrease confidence. Similarly, kindness towards others within the workplace enhances connectivity and is more likely to increase motivation to engage with peers and tasks. In general, kindness is 'infectious' and if shown regularly in an authentic way, it will propagate and spread.

The pandemic has required an extraordinary amount of uncomfortable adjustment from everyone. This adjustment is sadly ongoing since the tension caused by the uncertainty of the spread of the virus maintains stress and raises alarm in workers about further impact. It is not surprising therefore that most of today's workforce is anxious. Some individuals are also sad or under strain as a result of losses and changes that have occurred or, should further lockdowns happen, the potential future impact on their work and personal life. Just like going back to school has been difficult, going back to work has also been hard. It is therefore even more important that we acknowledge this and make sure that kindness is brought into the workplace so that we can all reassure each other of our support which will, in turn, help everyone feel safer.

Here are some suggestions:

- Have a random acts of kindness day at work and make time to reflect on how these have made people feel
- Make a point of making sure any feedback you might want to give is kind.
- On-line communication isn't always kind – check your words and send a kind message to at least two colleagues per day



- Over-working and being in a rush often compromises being kind. Ensure you continue to be kind even when efficient.
- Wearing a mask can often impact on kindness since you can't see facial expressions, it's not easy to spot a smile or even sometimes hear inflections in a voice. Make sure your tone of voice and words are kind
- Make sure you deal with a contentious issue face to face rather than by email or text. Written words can often be misinterpreted
- Office gossip is often unkind. Hold back from talking about someone behind their back
- Say thank you to unsung heroes at work – the office cleaner, the security person.
- Giving to others is a resilience factor. Do something for charity
- Pay an honest compliment to a colleague.

Get more mental health tips from stem4 here: <https://stem4.org.uk/resilience/>

Find out more about International week of happiness at work here:

<https://internationalweekofhappinessatwork.com/>

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About stem4: stem4 is a Wimbledon based, award winning charity that supports teenage mental health. In order to foster positive teenage mental health, it provides evidence-based education, builds resilience, enhances motivation to change, and signposts to ensure early intervention and action. stem4 focuses on commonly occurring mental health issues in teenagers including eating disorders, anxiety, depression, self-harm and addiction. stem4's work is primarily provided digitally through their innovative education programme, pioneering mental health apps and clinically-informed website. They also host mental health conferences that contribute to helping young people and those around them flourish. stem4 targets and supports families, schools, health professionals and communities as well as the teenagers themselves.

Website: Please see website for more information www.stem4.org.uk

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