KINDNESS

Kindness Changes Everything.

Kindness means different things to different people. To a small child, it's giving a dandelion to a grandparent. To the grandparent, it's receiving the dandelion with gratitude. To a young person, it might be giving a like on social media, and to someone else that 'like' can be a matter of life and death.

Some people see kindness as weakness, but that is not the case. Being kind requires mental toughness, courage and strength. Kindness is a personal and an inter-personal skill. To be kind to others, you must learn to be tough enough to be kind to yourself first. This means that instead of beating

yourself up all the time because you're too sad, angry, scared, unhappy; or not good, clever or strong enough, you have to have the courage to challenge that thinking and start being fair, compassionate and complimentary about YOU.

It is not always easy (or popular!) to be kind to others, but it's great "mental health first aid" for the world. You can start by opening your eyes and noticing others around you. Notice when someone else is having a hard day. Give some honest compliments to friends and family. Send a 'thinking of you' Snapchat, decide not to gossip. Keep practising being kind.

Recently, my teenage neighbour offered to do the shopping for all the shut in's during lockdown. He is Polish and is the nicest kid you could meet! People were so touched that a young person would be so kind. I am so happy that we could all celebrate him for the great guy he is! That's what kindness is all about.

It is also kind to tell the truth gently. I remember the time I got my hair dyed and a kid told me that he liked me as a person, but he wasn't sure the bright red was my colour. I thought it was kind that he was so honest – it didn't stop me dyeing my hair red, but it was lovely to know that he cared enough to be truthful with me!

Kindness is free. It doesn't cost you a thing, but it might mean the world to someone who needs it. Kindness bring the rewards of joy, fulfilment and caring and all of those are things that contribute to great mental health. Like Jennifer Dukes-Lee said, "In a world where you can be anything, be kind."