

There is kindness everywhere

In his book *The Kindness Revolution*, Hugh Mackay notes that: *listening is one of the most precious gifts we can give each other. It is one of the most potent symbols of love and friendship. It's one of the loveliest expressions of kindness. It's one of the greatest sources of encouragement to the discouraged, confidence to the insecure and comfort to the emotionally wounded* (2021. 83).

Listening is also an act of kindness that we can all practise in the everyday of our lives. It requires care and openness to others and the ability to put aside our own needs and preconceptions. It requires attentiveness, patience and the ability to step into the shoes of another without judgement. And it requires courage to open ourselves to the burdens and sorrow of others.

Listening is a gift we can give others – friends, family, colleagues and strangers – anywhere and anytime. Attentive listening is a way of saying ‘you matter’. It is a humble, responsive and loving response to those who walk life’s journey with us.

When describing acts of kindness like listening, Mackay observes that everyday acts of kindness, compassion, goodwill, cooperation go unremarked precisely because they are unremarkable for members of a species like ours.

This is my simple religion. No need for temples. No need for complicated philosophy. Your own mind, your own heart is the temple. Your philosophy is simple kindness.

- Dalai Lama XIV

The people who stop to help total strangers out of a jam ... the people who, night after night, week after week, year after year, volunteer their services to help feed the poor and homeless ... the people who have cheerfully sacrificed their own ambition to support a spouse, or a child who needed them ... the people who volunteer big chunks of their week to patrol surf beaches, or train as bush fire-fighters, or coach sports teams or help immigrants struggling with English... (2021. 44).

This list could go on and on, but Mackay is making the point that kindness is never about doing something for another to reap a benefit – it is the essential quality of a cooperative species ... *a frame of mind; a way of being in the world* (47).

We could probably debate whether kindness is hard-wired in the human psyche, but there is certainly kindness everywhere. And kindness is contagious. It is revolutionary and transforming. It is something we can all practise in our own homes, communities and workplaces. Kindness helps people feel respected, valued and worthy. It helps them feel connected to others; reinforcing that they belong. The more people who experience kindness from you, the happier people you’ll have in your life.

In the words of St Teresa of Calcutta: *Spread kindness wherever you go and let nobody come to you without leaving happier.*



Reflection: Where can you reach out in kindness to others?
When have you seen the impact of everyday acts of kindness?

We acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional owners of the lands on which our ministries exist and the Elders both past and present on whose land we walk, work and live. We support the Uluru Statement from the Heart.