

MAY NEWSLETTER

Are You Too Nice?



We've all done it, held the door for someone who was slightly too far away so they did the little awkward jog so you weren't waiting for too long. This is an example of two people who are being nice. As Canadians being nice is what we are known for; we're actually known as being one of the 'nicest' countries in the world.

But is there a time when you can be *too* nice? And what is this really doing to you?

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Nice Vs. Kind

Most people don't ever think about this, but being nice to someone and being kind to someone are two completely different things.

Nice primarily involves being pleasant, polite, unoffensive and agreeable in our interactions with others. It typically comes from social expectations and how we were raised, however it can also come from a desire to be liked and accepted by others. When you feel like you have to be nice to someone, or are told to be nice to someone, it can feel disingenuous. Which in turn can make us feel bad or guilty because we didn't feel that we could be authentic in that moment.

Kindness is different. It evokes genuine feelings of empathy, connection, consideration that may or may not fulfill social expectations. True kindness is motivated by the desire to uplift others without the need or want to be recognized for those actions. However, kindness can sometimes be a double edged sword because kindness may mean not giving another person what they want in that moment for the purpose of longer term gain; as the saying goes it's 'cruel to be kind'. An example of this could be a parent who takes away a child's gaming console to focus on school work. The child doesn't think that was nice, it probably doesn't feel nice to do, but we know that it's beneficial in the long run.

"Being Kind Isn't Always Nice"

As Sweet as Sugar

In your quest to maintain harmony and avoid hurting others you may find yourself sugarcoating the truth. Many people view this a polite and positive characteristic. However, excessive politeness can be harmful by muddying the waters of communication creating opportunity for misunderstandings and potentially leaving important issues unresolved.

A key component of communicating effectively is taking responsibility for your emotions and letting other people take responsibility for their emotions. This allows healthy relationships develop and for each person to create their own boundaries by evaluating their wants and needs. If you soften the blow when delivering bad news to the extent that you leave others confused about your intentions, you haven't lived up to that standard.

People Pleasing

Sugarcoating is often a form of people pleasing. There are many reasons why someone would want to please others and can come into play during a range of scenarios. But no matter the topic, there are some common reasons we become overly nice.

Fear of conflict or judgement: Many people avoid direct communication and sharing their thoughts or opinions because they are afraid of conflict or how others will perceive them. They believe that by softening their words they will minimize the risk of an argument or hurting someone's feelings.

Desire to please: Some people experience a strong need to be liked and accepted by others. This need leads them to say and do things to avoid displeasing to maintain a positive image.

Cultural and gender norms: In some cultures, indirect communication is the norm, and being overly polite is a way to show respect. Interestingly, this can be seen in North American culture with regards to how women tend to do more work socially to maintain harmony.

How This Can Be Harmful

Whether you are delivering difficult news with a smile or thanking someone while trying to share your displeasure, being too nice comes with risks which can be harmful for your wellbeing.

Misinterpretation is a common issue. When you communicate something wrapped in niceness and politeness the true intention of the communication can get lost. The person who is receiving the message may not be able to grasp the importance or urgency of the message. They may also view it as *optional*, and continue to do whatever it was disregarding what you shared.

Chocolate Peanut Butter Berry Bowl

3 /4 cup Plain or Vanilla Greek Yogurt

1 tbsp Peanut Butter

1 scoop Chocolate Protein Powder
(Can use cocoa powder)

100g of Mixed Berries
(strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, etc; thawed frozen berries work if you can't get fresh)

2 tbsp Chocolate Chips

Mix yogurt, peanut butter and protein powder together in a bowl until smooth. Then add berries and chocolate chips! Enjoy!

Softened communication can prevent important topics from being addressed and therefore creating **unresolved issues**. When feedback or communication is not clear the recipient may not recognize the need for change or improvement.

Overtime, the lack of respect for one's boundaries, misinterpretations and issues left unsolved can create feelings of **frustration, anger and resentment**. This is especially true if one party feels that they are not being listened to or understood.

How to Be Direct While Being Kind

Being straightforward can feel very uncomfortable, especially if it's something you don't usually do. However it is kinder to yourself and others. By being able to directly share what you need to say you can tell others what you want and need, enforce your own boundaries and avoid future confusion. When communicating clearly it is important to know what you want to say and how you want to say it.

Some tips that can help you feel more comfortable while being direct while still maintaining kindness include; knowing your points in advance, practicing empathy and setting the tone.

Knowing your points in advance comes from thinking about the conversation you would like to have and how you would like it to go. It's being able to identify the main points you need to make and practicing how to deliver them. It can be really helpful to write your points down. While doing this it is important pay attention to things you may say to avoid hurting the other person's feelings such as 'we can still be friends', even if you don't really mean it. Edit and revise your points until you feel confident that you are not sending mixed messages.



Practicing empathy can be a bit less straightforward. It's important to note that empathy and sympathy are different. Empathy is feeling *with* someone and doing your best to understand how they are feeling. Sympathy is when you feel *for* someone and you may not take the time to consider what they are experiencing or feeling. It can sound like 'I feel so bad for them', which often evokes feelings of pity.

Be mindful of your tone during the conversation. Be direct while maintaining a warm and respectful tone to help ensure your message is received positively. When you are doing this make sure you are showing appropriate body language, if your body language contradicts what you are saying it can send mixed messages that others can interpret incorrectly. For example smiling while delivering bad news or laughing while setting a boundary. Ultimately you want to physically match the tone of the conversation, if it's a serious conversation be serious.

Overall, it's natural to want to spare others feelings and make them feel good during your interactions with them, but overly 'nice' communication can do more harm than good. The goal is not to abandon politeness but to balance it with honesty and clarity. By striving for more direct and honest interactions, you can reduce misunderstandings and cultivate relationships built on trust and clarity.

Money Buys Happiness In Different Ways, In Different Places

The University of British Columbia recently completed multinational study which results show money can buy you happiness- but it depends on what you spend your money on and where you live.

It was shown that happiness achieved through spending varies significantly between higher and lower income groups. When individuals from wealthier nations spend money on gifts and time-saving services, such as housekeeping, it leads to a greater boost in happiness. However, other expenditures such as paying off debt or paying for housing was perceived as bringing individuals less happiness in wealthier countries. Regardless of region it was shown that came from purchases was long- lasting and led to high feelings of well-being even months after the purchase.



“The study, funded by an anonymous donor couple and the TED organization, is the largest to date examining spending and happiness across diverse cultural and economic settings. The researchers examined the happiness impacts of a one-time \$10,000 US windfall spent by 200 participants across seven countries, on 3,225 purchases ranging from smartphones to housing. The participants recorded their purchases and rated how happy each made them. Six months later, the researchers reassessed their overall well-being.

The findings reveal intriguing cultural and economic differences in what brings people joy.” (UBC, 2025).

Certain Types of Purchases Bring Happiness Worldwide

The study highlighted how cultural and practical realities in different contexts shape happiness people feel while spending. Some purchases such as donations and experiences increased feelings of happiness regardless of where the participant lived, other types of purchases had more impact based on where the participant called home.

Individuals in wealthier countries such as Canada and the England found experienced the most happiness when spending money on gifts and time-saving services as mentioned previously. In lower-income countries such as Kenya and Indonesia reported more feelings of joy when purchasing investing in basic needs and financial stability.

The most notable discoveries from the study include;

- Spending money of gifts brought high levels of joy globally, but had a stronger emotional impact in wealthier countries
- The costs of donations, experiences, education and personal care brought similar levels of happiness around the world.
- Time saving services were more valued in wealthier countries where time scarcity is reported as being a common stressor.
- Housing and debt relief brought the most joy lower-income countries, but did not have the same effect in wealthier countries.



The researchers are hoping that the information gathered will be used to create more inclusive advice on happiness and financial well-being. After all what works in Toronto may not apply to those in Laos. Happiness should not be shaped by how much money we have, but how align our spending with our unique values and needs.

Updates, This & That

Limited Services will be Available During the May 24th Weekend

It is recommend that clients speak to their practitioners about their availability around that time.

Be Entered in a Draw to Win a FREE Massage!

To be entered in the draw you need to take part in Align's referral program. Your practitioner will give you a card at the end of your session with your name on it. Give them out to friends, family members or colleagues, when they come in for their first appointment they can drop the card off at the front desk to enter you in the draw! If you have any questions ask your practitioner for clarification.



Did You Know....

That Sweden is considered to be the most mentally well country in the world. It is often attributed to the countries strong social safety net, work-life balance and focus on mental well being. It has also been highlighted that access to green spaces and acceptance of mental health care are key factors for Sweden's mental wellness.