# AfHA Ep7 Kindness

**Narelle:** So hello and welcome to the Happtivist Podcast for Action for Happiness Australia. We want to inspire action for compassionate and connected society, and to do this we use and share the science of well-being in a way that you can connect with, understand and apply immediately. So in this podcast we promote individual and collective action. We want to empower you with your wellbeing, provide ideas, make connexions and inspire you. So who are we? Well, hello, I'm Narelle. I'm the chair of Action for Happiness Australia. I'm also an educator, coach and researcher and I'm passionate about self care and translating this into the everyday. One of the habits that I use to pause is to make, and I do this through cooking, knitting and drawing, and I'd have to say additionally, weaving.

**Linda:** Weaving. Nice. Hello, I'm Linda, Secretary of Action for Happiness Australia. I'm also a facilitator, coach and trainer. I'm passionate about wellbeing at work and the restorative power of walking in nature. It's benefits to our body, brain and mind.

**Narelle:** So in this episode, we're going to be talking about kindness. So what is it? Kindness is really interesting because it's unlike an emotion such as happiness or a feeling, an action like gratitude. Kindness is mostly a behaviour or action. So kindness means being nice or offering the best of yourself to someone, whether it be a minute, a second or longer. So I wonder, Linda, can we talk about kindness and especially random acts of kindness?

**Linda:** Oh, what a wonderful topic. This aligns so well with the Action for Happiness Purpose, which of course includes helping individuals and communities take practical action to improve their own wellbeing and make others happier, too. So there are so many benefits to random acts of kindness, both for the person giving kindness and the person receiving it, and also for anyone witnessing the act. So no matter which end of it you're on, you can't help but benefit really. Nice.

**Narelle:** And something that I really love about that concept of kindness. So let's unpack it. So let's think about a random act of kindness as a non premeditated action designed to offer kindness towards the outside world. And these acts are performed by a person wishing to either help or positively affect another person. And this person can be someone you know, but often it's someone you do not know. And that's the part I really love as well. So some examples of random acts of kindness include giving compliments, giving gifts, saying kind words, showing gratitude, doing an act of service to someone else, being respectful, noticing good things that others do well, something like giving you time to someone else. So let's talk about some examples. So I'm thinking about some, some here in terms of you could give a flower to a stranger. I love that. Picking a flower from your garden and just randomly giving out. Hi. Hello. Thank you. Passing out. I can see it happening on the street and some marvellous little poses and looks of confusion and smiles and conversations. It could be something like buying a gift card to give to a stranger. It could be offering to be there for a friend when they're struggling with something. It could be giving bottles of water to people who are working outside on a hot day. It could even be something like buying a sandwich for the next person in the lunch line. I like that one. It's a nice surprise. I've experienced it before being in Hong Kong, actually with a bus ticket that the gentleman in front of me paid for my bus ticket, which was really nice. Total random act of kindness. That was just. Just so beautiful. So, Linda, what about you?

**Linda:** Yeah, Narelle, I think kindness doesn't need to take much time or money, and the examples that you've shared are great examples. Sometimes I think it's as simple as meeting someone's gaze as you walk past and just acknowledging them or giving them a kind word, as you said. And whether this is people you see on your morning walk or the person who's sleeping rough, it might even be sharing something of yourself. So an experience that you've had that just lets them know that they're not alone in what they're going through. So letting people know that you see them and that they matter is a great kindness in itself. Might also be things like allowing the car, you know, that's trying to enter traffic, go in front of you and you're stopped at the. So neither of these actions take a lot of time or money. Some of my favourite things when I'm able to. I like to send people small gifts in the mail just to let them know that I'm thinking of them and just to really listen to what they like or enjoy so that the gift is personalised and to send it just with a handwritten note. Each year on special occasion. So if it's my birthday or Easter or Christmas, I buy bears for kids with cancer and I donate them to whichever hospitals most in need. So so there's lots and lots of ways to be kind. And I guess for me, kindness really stems from the ability to see what's happening for others. So it's that noticing part and also being compassionate. So seeking to to do something to act in some way just to make things a little easier for someone else and to do this in ways that are within your means. So the time, money, influence or resources that you have available and you know, at times you might not have the means and that's when you might practise self kindness or perhaps accept the kindness of others.

**Narelle:** I really love that. So many wonderful examples there. Linda and I particularly love what you've just ended with in terms of the practise of self kindness and accepting the kindness of others. It's so hard to do when we're so used to being busy, busy, or we're caring for others or we're doing things for others, or perhaps even how we've grown up and how we we think about ourselves as well. And it's such a beautiful gift that we can give ourselves when we can allow others to care for us and be kind to us. And and what comes with that? That's a really beautiful point.

**Linda:** Yeah, thanks. And I think it is really important because accepting the kindness of others actually is a kindness to them in a sense as well, because of the benefits to the giver as well as the receiver.

**Narelle:** Hmm. Totally. Totally. I love it. Okay, so this part of the podcast is the gifts that we're giving ourselves. So let's end with a quick piece of advice to help us put things into action. So the American public psychologist guru Sonja Lyubomirsky, in her book, A Practical Guide to Getting the Life You Want The How of Happiness. She looked at the how and why strategies worked in relation to our engagement with them. And so she identified those five critical mechanisms that for those who are regular listeners, will we start to be able to talk through and share quite, quite regularly now? And they are positive emotion, time, social support, motivation, effort and commitment and habit. So what do these look like? Sound like, feel like in relation to kindness and your next steps? So, okay, Linda, let's share some tips. So positive emotion. I'm going to suggest exploring random acts of kindness and what happens to the positive emotions for yourself, the recipient and even those who are around who have watched or heard about it and really just tuning in to what that is and what happens. How about you, Linda?

**Linda:** Yeah. I love this Narelle. And as we've already mentioned, the great thing about kindness is that people who witness kindness are also more likely to do a random act of kindness themselves. So it really has that positive ripple effect or that emotional contagion. So I think savouring fits here, too. In addition to kind of noticing what's happening for yourself, really being able to focus on those positive emotions and just ramp them up as well. So our second tip here is in relation to time. So I think as you've already mentioned, it's really tempting to cram as much as you can into your day, which of course can sometimes lead to being stressed or being really narrow and task focussed. So taking regular breaks, coming up for air and noticing what's going on for others I think is the first step in terms of then being able to act in a kind way towards others. Narelle, what about you?

**Narelle:** I really love what you've just said there. Linda So, so important. And I'm also going to recommend making the time to be kind. And I'd even encourage you to go out of your way to show kindness in those situations where someone else may be transferring their stress onto you or others, or those situations where you find it quite awkward and just sitting in that space of kindness. What does that look like in that that moment for you and for others as well?

**Linda:** Nice. I love that.

**Narelle:** Let's have a look at social support and what that can be. So thinking of an experience and explore some different ideas with kindness and random acts of kindness, such as put a positive note in a library book. Now my good friend Sharon does this and I love it every time that she does it. And she she shares it either with me through a text or I might see it on an Instagram post. And she pops these little notes with randomly inside a book cover. Or it's just talking outside the book and it's in the library or a shared space. And so the next reader comes along and opens up and reading through and something pops out and it's like, Ooh, what is this? And it's just these beautiful note, a positive affirmation, something inspirational. I just. I just love it. I get that little tingle just talking about it, let alone what it's going to be for the person who finds it. And I was also thinking about this, you know, those free little library boxes that we often see around in our community. They're attached to front yards. There's one near me near the train station, in amongst the trees. And you said it's in an old fridge, I think. And you open it up and there's these books and I'm thinking about things like donating some books to that, to some of these random community library, even living leaving little notes in, in those, those books as well would be really kind of cool in terms of that social, social support, random act of kindness in a way that is kind of cool and different. So what about you, Linda?

**Linda:** What a great idea. I love those unexpected delights. And as a book lover, you know, imagining opening a book and finding a positive note, there would be just great. So for me, it's noticing if someone's feeling left out. Maybe we're in a group and they don't know others well, or they might feel a little uncomfortable. So I think it's being aware of this and including people, introducing them to others, finding common interests or subjects to talk about just from a social perspective. Yeah. So very important. Yeah. So if we think about motivation, effort and commitment, sometimes being kind to others can take courage. I know I've been in situations where I've really wanted to reach out to someone and I wasn't really sure how they might take it. So sometimes there can even be a fear of rejection, you know, wondering if you do reach out and do something positive for someone, how will they might take it or what they might think? So in relation to motivation, I think it's about taking your motivation from your positive intent and the knowledge that what you will do will benefit the other person. Narelle, how about you?

**Narelle:** Hmm. That's a nice one. I'm going to think about motivation, effort and commitment in terms of making the effort. And I'm going to particularly think about the workspace now because it's something we've kind of mentioned that haven't quite and it can be a little bit of a difficult one because there are different relationships, different kind of people. Some people we get along really well with and we can find out our tribe within that workspace. And other times it's quite can be quite difficult to to connect, connect with one another. So I'm going to think about some suggestions here in terms of inviting the new colleague out to lunch or maybe for a coffee or a morning tea or afternoon tea and connecting in. Telling your boss about the great work that your co-workers are doing. And I really like that interruption because sometimes the boss unleashes what the problems are rather than, Oh, this person's really cool and you should check this out and all how they thought about this or how they've approached something so really nice to share those things. Another suggestion could be bring a co-worker a cup of coffee. I love walking the street and seeing people holding manoeuvring those trays of coffee, knowing that even if they've done a request. But the fact that you've gone out and and actioned it and brought them back is is a coffee is just so beautiful. And another one I really love and I often do this actually is leave a sticky note for a work colleague saying what you appreciate about them.

**Narelle:** So sometimes I'll just when I know they're not at their desk or they're around, I want to stick a little a little message on a sticky note on their computer monitor. So when they come back and find it, whenever that is, there's a nice little message there. Every now and then, I'll send little cards. And during COVID, when we were in lockdowns, I was able to send some random surprises through the mail as well to some of my colleagues just to say, hey, thank you, you're doing ice work and and share that appreciation. So, yeah, working making the time to do that when it comes from your heart is such a such a beautiful, beautiful thing. Okay. Our fifth aspect is habits. I'm going to think about this in terms of if we want to increase our happiness and well-being, we need to engage in acts of kindness that feel right for us. So we've shared a whole heap of different examples. For some of you listening, they may go, Oh yeah, that's a great idea. And others of you may write, right? I wouldn't do that. And the response is totally fine. What you want to do is find what is right for you. And so it's about developing habits that are right, that feel good and energise you. And we should take a moment to think through what kindness means to us and what kinds of kindness would make us feel good. So thinking through that, in terms of what's legitimate for you, how about you, Linda?

**Linda:** I agree. Narelle. I love that. I think there is some types of giving and kindness that benefit the giver more than others. So, for instance, if you have a direct debit that goes from your account each month to a charity, for instance, then you might not get the feel good rewards because it just happens automatically. It's just kind of really transactional. So that wellbeing boost isn't there compared to if you were to go in person to the charity and donate the funds. So that's where you're interacting with the person and you have the physical experience of giving. So I think it is really important that you develop the right habit in a way that makes sense for you and feels authentic and perhaps it has meaning for you as well with this. Yeah. So if we look at some practical tips, let's share, share one tip each. So for me, I think it's about reflecting on what I appreciate about others, a particular person, and sending them a handwritten note, really taking the time to notice what's going on for people and being able to offer help. I'm not a very practical person. I can't fix the toilet, a hopeless gardening. If you let me loose in your garden, I will probably pull the plants and leave the weeds.

**Linda:** So for me, offering help usually consists of things like listening, taking them out for a meal or taking them over a meal that they can heat up or lending them a good book. You know, I have a kind of knack for matching books with people kind of at the right time, so. So they're my practical things. Narelle, what about you?

**Narelle:** Yeah really nice. I love that. I've got visuals of you in the garden. Pulling out, pulling up, like, no, that's my favourite plant. It's gorgeous. So I'm going to think about the scene and ask that question to our listeners is "What is something you love doing that you can share with somebody else"? And it could be something like baking or helping someone out, mowing the lawn or doing some gardening. It could be walking a dog, visiting someone, writing a note, sending a text. Just something that you can do that you can share with with someone. And whether it's a gift that you have in your own skills and capacity, or it's just the fact that you can listen, that you can be there, that you can share some kindness in some sort of way. So what is something that you love doing that you can share with somebody else is my practical tip question to ponder Christ. So we've love connecting with you in this episode and sharing insights into kindness and in our show notes. We'll have some links for you that can support you further. So we want to know what you think, what's inspired you, and any questions you would like to have answered. So leave a review on Apple. Because reviews help us be found and help us help others. And you're sharing is also an action to help others as well. And you may like to leave a comment or a question and you can also do this by Instagram, Facebook or LinkedIn. You can find us at www.actionforhappinessaustralia.org And on Facebook and LinkedIn We are Action for Happiness Australia and then you can find us on Instagram and we are Happtivist. So we really hope you enjoy this episode and we can't wait for you to join us next time.