

## **The Friday blog with Dr Francey...**

So this week was Mental Health Awareness Week in the UK. The theme is '**Kindness**' .

Kindness is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as :

***'the quality of being friendly, generous, and considerate.'***

Being kind may be thought of as gentle, calm, caring and warm, but at times, kindness may in fact require immense strength and courage.

We have all seen acts of kindness over recent weeks, from helping our family and friends with shopping, checking up on a lonely neighbour, or the courage of our key workers, to keep going, providing essential services to us all during this pandemic.

Mentalhealth.org.uk have used kindness as their theme because....

***'of its singular ability to unlock our shared humanity. Kindness strengthens relationships, develops community and deepens solidarity. It is a cornerstone of our individual and collective mental health. Wisdom from every culture across history recognises that kindness is something that all human beings need to experience and practise to be fully alive.'***

I suppose it should be selfless....as I say, we should just be kind without expecting anything back, but you can't deny the warm feeling inside when you see someone smile as a result of something you've done or said. It doesn't have to be much, but when people know you have thought about them, it gives them a feeling of being cared for, no matter how trivial or small the act may seem, and that can only be good for all of our mental health.

It has certainly been tested in recent weeks. Desperate worry about our physical health and that of our loved ones, the stress and anxiety of worrying about our livelihoods, the inherent risks to small businesses, and stress of providing for our families, as well as the worry of returning to 'normal', has all been taking its toll.

### **How do we protect ourselves?**

One of my children's teachers sent a video with a great analogy this week. He inflated a red balloon, on which he drew a stressed face. He then burst it with a 'stress pin' representing his head exploding. (which feels all too real at times!) He then had another balloon, (a blue one this time, with a calmer face) onto which he stuck plasters. The plasters represented the things we do to protect ourselves...then, when he tried to stick 'stress pins' in the areas covered in plasters, the pins just slid through, and lo and behold, the balloon (our head) stayed intact!

So what could these plasters be? Some people practise yoga, or meditate, other people find that running, cycling, swimming, or any other exercise helps to calm them.

I dusted my bike off last week, and to my delight, discovered the simple pleasure of cycling down a quieter than usual road onto a cycle path just a stone's throw from my house! Chatting to a friend summed it up perfectly; it was just like being a child again, riding along, with the wind in my hair! It felt exhilarating. So I did it again the next day, and again today! It might just become a habit....

It may be a little rusty and make a really annoying clicking noise as it goes, but I know I'm lucky to have a bike, and a safe path to go on.

### **What else can we do?**

Some people struggle to get out of the front door due to their anxiety, or lack the outside space to walk safely. Finding activities that we could do from the safety of our homes can still be relaxing. It may be baking, reading, or just stroking a pet. Colouring books have become extremely popular again in recent times, and I must admit to owning a few. It is relaxing, (again until one of my children tries to help...and goes outside the lines...) but it's ok, I can turn the page and start another. It's still therapeutic.

Talking, whether to friends or family, is vitally important, and many people have learned how to use video chats, set up WhatsApp groups with neighbours or friends, and families have been having quiz nights and even playing bingo or 'sharing' a pizza over the wonders of modern technology! It's a way to feel connected.

For some people though, that is too hard or perhaps not possible, and at those times, there are people who can help.

### **Talking is therapy. Being listened to is important.**

Here are some phone numbers/links to the services available for those moments when you need to talk, need support, to talk, or be listened to:

**Mental health helplines – NHS** [www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mental-health-helplines](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mental-health-helplines)

**Samaritans:** Call them for free on 116 123

**Childline:** [www.childline.org.uk/get-support/contacting-childline/](http://www.childline.org.uk/get-support/contacting-childline/)

or Call 0800 1111 from 9am - midnight

**National Domestic Violence Helpline:** Call for free and confidential advice, 24 hours a day on 0800 2000 247

I asked our team here at Great Sutton to think of words or activities that made them feel better. Here's what they said....

SMELL THE ROSES *The great outdoors*

Thoughtfulness

Inspire CONFIDENCE

*Friendship* KINDNESS

Share

MINDFULNESS

MUSIC

T  
r  
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RELAX

TODDLER'S GIGGLES  
SMILE

Give

Try

SUNSHINE

*Laughter*

CHOCOLATE

PERSEVERANCE

STRONG

TEAM

Peace

CUDDLES

LOVE

Health

Care

Hope

Singing every day!

HAPPY

Togetherhness

Motivate RESPECT

*Faith*

*Family*

Dancing

*Freedom*

Butterflies

PICNICS

SANDCASTLES

PIC•COLLAGE

