

# Kindness in healthcare

## Kindness – a reading list

The following list includes research and commentary articles, books, courses and more on kindness.

### Measuring kindness

In order to measure something, we first need to define it, but kindness is subjective and difficult to define. The following articles centre on **developing tools** and **methods** to **measure kindness**.

- [Anderson, Simon and Brownlie Julie](#)  
**Getting the measure of kindness: a guide for organisations.**  
Dunfermline: Carnegie UK Trust, 2021  
*In October 2019, Carnegie UK first brought together a Kindness Leadership Network (KiLN), with the stated aim of supporting and challenging organisations to take practical action to embed kindness into their workplaces and services. This guide is intended to support organisations to develop their approach to measurement, providing a range of questions, tools and approaches to consider.*  
<https://carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/getting-the-measure-of-kindness/>  
ISBN: 9781912908721
- [Austin B. Hake and Stephen G. Post](#)  
**Kindness: definitions and a pilot study for the development of a kindness scale in healthcare.**  
*PLOS ONE* 2023; 18 (1): e0288766 (19 July 2023)  
*Kindness is a simple, time-sensitive behavior not yet well characterized in the healthcare setting. With this study, we aim to clearly define it as well as investigate a few common examples of kindness that might be used to create a scale for use in the healthcare setting.*  
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0288766>  
ISSN: 19326203
- [Couris, John D.](#)  
**Driving health care results with authenticity, kindness, and vulnerability: a new model of authentic leadership.**  
*Doctoral dissertation*  
Tampa: University of South Florida, 2021

Current management scholars have defined authentic leadership as consisting of four dimensions: relational transparency, self-awareness, balanced processing, and internalized moral perspective. This research extends the concept of authentic leadership to include kindness and vulnerability. I created two scales to measure kindness and vulnerability within the context of leadership and used them to examine perceptions of authentic leadership and its impact on three organizational outcomes: trust in one's leader, work engagement, and psychological safety.  
<https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/etd/9093>

## Research behind kindness

If you would like to read a bit more about the **evidence behind kindness** and studies conducted on kindness, give the following articles a read:

- [Bradshaw, Jane; Siddiqui, Nazlee; Greenfield, David; and Sharma, Anita](#)  
**Kindness, listening, and connection: patient and clinician key requirements for emotional support in chronic and complex care.**  
*Journal of Patient Experience* 2022; (12 April 2022)  
*This study aimed to investigate the strategies to embed emotional support from the perspectives of patients and clinicians. Three main themes emerged from the experience of both the patients and clinicians: (1) warmth and kindness, (2) deep listening, and (3) social connection in the process of treatment.*  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/23743735221092>
- [Curry, O. S., Rowland, L. A., Van Lissa, C. J., Zlotowitz, S., McAlaney, J., & Whitehouse, H.](#)  
**Happy to help? A systematic review and meta-analysis of the effects of performing acts of kindness on the well-being of the actor.**  
*Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 76, 320-329. (2018)  
*A a systematic review and meta-analysis of the experimental evidence that kindness interventions (for example, performing 'random acts of kindness') boost subjective well-being.*
- [Landry, Shannon; Bisson, Kathy; Cook, Colleen; and Morrison, Linda](#)  
**How a culture of kindness can improve employee engagement and patient experience - and five ways to get there.**  
*Nursing Leadership* 2018; 31 (3): 42-47 (September 2018)  
*Aware of the evidence demonstrating how important employee engagement is to patient experience, outcomes and cost containment, leadership at Bluewater Health, Sarnia, was looking for strategic solutions to improve engagement. Work with compassion fatigue and resilience specialists suggested focusing on kindness. This article shares the hospital's experience designing and implementing their campaign.*

- [Maré, Jeannette](#)

**Kindness in hospitals: a mixed-methods reasoned action approach to understanding prosocial communication in healthcare**

*Doctoral dissertation*

Tucson: University of Arizona, 2023

*A rapidly growing body of evidence concludes that kindness is vital to human health and well-being. In hospitals, healthcare delivered with kindness improves patient and provider outcomes. The current studies used group concept mapping and the reasoned action framework to operationalise kindness and examine the underlying beliefs and psychological determinants of kind behavior in hospitals.*

<https://repository.arizona.edu/handle/10150/670251>

- [Thurman Ben](#)

**Leading with kindness: a report on the learning from the Kindness Leadership Network.**

Dunfermline: Carnegie UK Trust, 2019

*This report tells the story of KiLN, narrating how the network and its members adapted to Covid-19, and what was learnt about what is possible when kindness becomes an operating principle. It finishes with a Commitment to Kindness that distils this collective learning into six goals designed to enable organisations of all kinds and in all places to sustain and deepen their focus on kindness.*

<https://carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/leading-with-kindness/>

## Commentary articles on kindness

The following articles comment on kindness, the current **challenges faced**, and **what we can do** moving forwards. This includes promoting kindness in **leadership**.

- [Allwood, Dominique; Koka, Sreenivas; Armbruster, Ryan; and Montori, Victor](#)  
**Leadership for careful and kind care.**

*BMJ Leader 2022; 6 (2): 125-129 (June 2022)*

*The fundamental role of healthcare organisations ought to be to care for patients. This article describes how, instead, healthcare has industrialised care; with care degraded, care has become transactional. It has overwhelmed the capacity of both the people called to care and those that receive care, and has rendered care unsustainable. We propose that leaders can restore care by turning their organisations away from industrial healthcare and asserting their organisation's purpose to enact careful and kind care.*

<https://doi.org/10.1136/leader-2021-000451>

- [Allwood, Dominique and Montori, Victor](#)  
**Careful, kind care is our compass out of the pandemic fog**  
*BMJ* 2022; 379 (2022)  
*The authors argue that industrialised healthcare is humanly and financially unsustainable. The way forward demands a radical change in healthcare to create the conditions for careful and kind care.*  
<https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj-2022-073444>
  
- [Berry Leonard L, Danaher Tracey S., Chapman Robert A. and, Awdish Rana L. A.](#)  
**Role of kindness in cancer care.**  
*Journal of Oncology Practice* 2017;13 (11):744-50 (November 2017)  
*The wonders of high-tech cancer care are best complemented by the humanity of high-touch care. Simple kindnesses can help to diffuse negative emotions that are associated with cancer diagnosis and treatment—and may even help to improve patients' outcomes. On the basis of our experience in cancer care and research, we propose six types of kindness in cancer care: deep listening; empathy for the patient with cancer; generous acts of discretionary effort that go beyond what patients and families expect from a care team; timely care; gentle honesty; and support for family caregivers. These mutually reinforcing manifestations of kindness—exhibited by self-aware clinicians who understand that how care is delivered matters—constitute a powerful and practical way to temper the emotional turmoil of cancer for patients, their families, and clinicians themselves.*  
<https://doi.org/10.1200/JOP.2017.02619>
  
- [Biggar, Susan; Fletcher, Martin; Van Der Gaag, Anna; and Austin, Zubin](#)  
**Finding space for kindness: public protection and health professional regulation**  
*International Journal for Quality in Health Care* 2022; 34 (3): mzac057,  
*The primary aim of health professional regulators is safeguarding public interest, but this cannot be undertaken effectively unless attention is paid to the well-being of all those involved. Both professionals and complainants express high levels of dissatisfaction with current regulatory processes. Are there also ways of integrating kindness into regulatory practice while still maintaining a strong focus on patient safety?*  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/intqhc/mzac057>
  
- [Faust, H. S.](#)  
**Kindness, Not Compassion, in Healthcare.**  
*Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics*, 18, 287-299, 2009  
*In this essay, Faust argues for the prioritisation of kindness over compassion in healthcare settings. While compassion often involves feeling sorry for someone's suffering, kindness involves actively doing something to alleviate that suffering and therefore kindness should be the guiding principle in healthcare interactions.*

- [Ferguson Zoe](#)  
**Kinder communities: the power of everyday relationships.**  
Dunfermline: Carnegie UK Trust, 2016  
*Evidence consistently shows that positive relationships and kindness are at the heart of our wellbeing. This discussion paper starts a process to engage directly with people who want to inject kindness into their work and communities. The paper explores evidence concerning the impact of everyday relationships and kindness on wellbeing for society as well as individuals. The project aim is to learn with communities and organisations to develop practical approaches to encourage kinder communities.*  
<https://carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/kinder-communities-power-everyday-relationships/>  
ISBN: 9781909447455
  
- [Fryburg, David A.](#)  
**Kindness isn't just about being nice: the value proposition of kindness as viewed through the lens of incivility in the healthcare workplace.**  
*Behavioral Sciences 2023; 13 (6): 457 (June 2023)*  
*The healthcare workplace is a high-stress environment. All stakeholders, including patients and providers, display evidence of that stress. The warrant for promoting kindness, therefore, is enormous. Kindness creates positive interpersonal connections, which, in turn, buffers stress and fosters resilience. Ways to promote kindness, including leadership modeling positive behaviors as well as the deterrence of negative behaviors, are essential.*  
<https://doi.org/10.3390/bs13060457>  
ISSN: 2076328X
  
- [Gage, William](#)  
**Understanding the importance of kindness in nursing practice.**  
*Nursing Standard 2023; 38 (1): 27-34 (4 January 2023)*  
*This article outlines how kindness is a vital element of nursing practice, including how kindness is linked to the related concepts of compassion and civility. It explores kindness from the patient's or service user's perspective as one of the qualities they value most in nurses, as well as considering why kindness within a healthcare team is important to the delivery of safe and effective care.*
  
- [Klaber, R. E. and Bailey, Suzie](#)  
**Kindness: an underrated currency.**  
*BMJ 2019; 367 (8227): 487 (21 December 2019- 4 January 2020)*  
*This editorial discusses recent research into the transformative power of kindness in health care and argues for qualitative measures and outcomes to be equal to the quantitative when considering "our core purpose of delivering the best care possible".*  
<https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.l6099>

- [Unwin Julia](#)

**Kindness, emotions and human relationships: the blind spot in public policy.**

Dunfermline: Carnegie UK Trust, 2018

*There is growing recognition of the importance of kindness and relationships for societal wellbeing. But talking about kindness does not fit easily within the rational lexicon of public policy. Over the course of the last two years the Carnegie Trust has have been exploring the complexity and contradictions of kindness and public policy through a series of roundtables and events. This report brings together the learning from these discussions.*

<https://carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/kindness-emotions-and-human-relationships-the-blind-spot-in-public-policy/>

## Books on kindness

If you would like to read **books** on kindness, the following list includes a range of books on kindness in **leadership**, **healthcare** and kindness in the politics of a **global world**.

### Books on kindness in healthcare:

- [Ballatt John AND Campling Penelope](#)

**Intelligent kindness: reforming the culture of healthcare.**

London: Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2011

*The authors examine this topic from a variety of perspectives, including psychoanalytic thinking, group relations, neuropsychology, social psychology and ethology. This book calls on policymakers, managers, educators and clinical staff to apply and nurture intelligent kindness in the organisation and delivery of care and offers advice as to what this approach means in practice.*

ISBN: 9781908020048

- [Marshall-Andrews, Laura](#)

**What seems to be the problem?: a doctor's story about courage, compassion, and a new way to care.**

London: HQ, 2022

*In this powerful and deeply personal memoir, award-winning GP Dr Laura Marshall-Andrews introduces us to the patients who have shaped her radical approach to medicine. Determined to create change, she envisaged a new way to care that prioritised the lived experience of her patients. Created with the help of doctors, artists and complementary health practitioners, Dr Laura's pioneering holistic approach was revelatory. From those whose lives were changed by 'ineffective' drugs, to those for whom alternative therapies, kindness, and trust proved transformative, her patients began to flourish.*

ISBN: 9780008445027

- [Thurman, Ben](#)  
**The courage to be kind: reflecting on the role of kindness in the healthcare response to Covid-19.**  
 Dunfermline: Carnegie UK Trust, 2020  
*This report draws on a series of reflective conversations, conducted between April and September 2020 with five medics working in different parts of NHS Scotland. The conversations reflected on what can be achieved when united by a common purpose, and when work is underpinned by relationships and collaboration. But alongside the opportunities presented by changes in practice and a renewed focus on wellbeing, there was concern that this may be lost amidst a focus on remobilising and 'getting back to normal'.*  
<https://carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/the-courage-to-be-kind-reflecting-on-the-role-of-kindness-in-the-healthcare-response-to-covid-19/>  
 ISBN: 9781912908578
  
- [Trzeciak Stephen and Mazzealli Anthony](#)  
**Compassionomics: the revolutionary scientific evidence that caring makes a difference.**  
 Studer Gr, 2019  
*This review of the science - coupled with stories from the front lines of medicine - demonstrates that human connection in health care matters in astonishing ways.*  
 ISBN: 9781622181063
  
- [Watson, Christine](#)  
**The language of kindness: a nurse's story.**  
 London: Chatto & Windus, 2018  
*Christie Watson was a nurse for 20 years. Taking us from birth to death and from A&E to the mortuary, this book gives an account of a profession defined by acts of care, compassion and kindness.*  
 ISBN: 9781784741976

### **Books on kindness in leadership:**

- [Haskins, Gay, Thomas, Michael and Johri Lalit](#)  
**Kindness in leadership.**  
 London: Routledge, 2018.  
*This book explores both the concept and practice of kindness in leadership and consider them in different societal and organisational settings.*  
 ISBN: 9781138207349

### **Books on human nature and kindness in building and shaping the future of society**

- [Ballatt, John; Campling, Penelope and Maloney, Chris](#)  
**Intelligent kindness: rehabilitating the welfare state.**  
 Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020



*At a time of renewed concern about health, social care, and national unit, the authors reassert the value of the welfare state for society as a whole, not simply for those in need. It requires close attention, sensitivity, skill and support. Grounded in lived experience, and perspectives drawn from many disciplines, 'Intelligent Kindness' illuminates how to develop and sustain healthy organisational culture and effective, humane practice*

ISBN: 9781911623229

- [Bregman, R.](#)

**Humankind: A hopeful history.**

Bloomsbury publishing, 2020

*This book challenges the idea that humans are innately selfish and self-interests, and presents a more positive view of humanity. The author argues that by recognising that humans are inherently good, cooperative and altruistic beings, and by allowing people to make their own choices, we can build a more successful and positive society.*

- [Phillips, A., & Taylor, B.](#)

**On kindness.**

Macmillan, 2009

*Psychoanalyst Adam Phillips and historian Barbara Taylor present an elegant, thoughtful and concise analysis of kindness in history, in life and in the modern world. Suggesting that acts of kindness occur when we are at our most open and honest, they ask why it is that our faith in kindness has been shaken - and why we are all too ready to believe that antagonism has taken its place.*

- [Zaki, J.](#)

**The war for kindness: Building empathy in a fractured world.**

Robinson 2021

*In this book, Zaki examines the science behind empathy and kindness. He presents a different view of how empathy works, arguing that it is a choice, and thus a skill that can be improved. The author addresses the challenges to empathy in today's world but argues that through kindness, we can overcome these challenges and promote social change.*

## **Conversations, podcasts, blogs and more**

If you would like to **hear** and **learn** even more about kindness, check out the following resources.

- [Dean, L., & Doty, J.](#)

**The healing power of kindness.**

The Huffington Post (2017).

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/project-compassion-stanford/the-healing-power-of-kindness\\_b\\_6136272.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/project-compassion-stanford/the-healing-power-of-kindness_b_6136272.html).



- [Klaber, B.](#)  
**Leading for kindness in healthcare** - a plenary by Dr Bob Klaber at RCPCH Conference 2023 (youtube.com)
  
- [The King's Fund - Free online course through Future Learn](#)  
**An introduction to leading with kindness and compassion in health and social care.**  
*This introductory three-week is for anyone working in or interested in health and social care in its broadest sense, regardless of experience or role. It's designed to introduce you to some of the foundations of leadership, kindness, and compassion. You'll explore why these qualities matter now more than ever, and how to develop your personal practice of kind and compassionate leadership.*  
<https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/leadership-development/courses/leading-kindness-compassion-health-social-care>
  
- [Vanhaecht, Kris and Lee, Thomas H.](#)  
**The Mangomoment: small acts of health care kindness and leadership**  
NEJM Catalyst Innovations in Care Delivery (10 January 2024)  
*The Head of Quality and Safety Research at the Leuven Institute for Health Policy in Belgium and founder of the Mangomoment movement describes the origins of the movement and the concrete research conducted by his team that demonstrates how Mangomoments, which are small, organic acts of kindness and leadership from health professionals to patients and their families, can make a huge difference in patient safety and care quality.* <https://catalyst.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/CAT.24.0005>

*With thanks to the King's Fund, Nicki Macklin and Helena Blakeway for compiling this list*