

The other day I saw someone wearing a T-shirt with the message 'Be Kind' emblazoned across the front. It struck me that the words are simple but profound. What is it that gets in the way of kindness as a general rule of behaviour? I know we espouse kindness, but how often do we encounter it in a day?

Unkind behaviours seem to be in greater abundance. One of the characteristic features of the unkind is that the unkindness is most often enveloped in puffed up self-righteousness. "I have the right to be unkind to other humans because I have an axe to grind!"

There also seems to be a connection between being unkind and having to be right. Have you witnessed an argument between two people who both have a driving need to not only be RIGHT, but to make sure that the other is clearly WRONG. The digs can go deep and the insults can fly high.

Kindness used to be a virtue that was worth cultivating. My mother always told me that if you don't have something good to say about someone, don't say anything. We were encouraged to help others and to see the good in everyone. Now society is bombarded with the harsh images of reality TV where it is a dog-eat-dog world and the last person standing is the celebrity. No place for kindness in that picture!

When it comes to fostering kindness in our home, in our workplace, and in our community our first question needs to be, "What do I bring to the table? How kind am I?"

One of the most damaging ways that we can be unkind to others is to engage in gossip. Gossiping is a way of attacking another individual from a distance with the cowardly benefit of never having to be accountable for the accuracy of the content or the resulting harm to that person.

Sometimes we are unkind and we don't know why we behaved in such a manner. Perhaps you were irritable about something else. Maybe it was easier to be unkind rather than to take the

time to be kind.

It can be more time-consuming to be kind and it can also be frustrating. This applies to situations where someone is being unkind to you. Poor customer service comes to mind. You may encounter someone who is brusque and unpleasant toward you. This is when it is easy to give back what you get. However, if you slow things down and concentrate, you can at least be kind yourself, even if you can't change the other person. And you may get them to change their tone with a smile and a soft word.

Kindness is the glue of civilization. It represents the special light inside that is our humanity. The key to being a kind person is that it starts within and it is the gift that keeps on giving.

I think I am going to get myself one of those T-shirts. Be kind to one another!