


THE LITTLE BOOK OF KINDNESS



Be the Ripple



**Our gift to you for Random Acts of
Kindness Day 2021**

A large, stylized graphic consisting of several concentric, overlapping circular bands in various shades of blue (dark, medium, and light). The bands are arranged in a way that they appear to flow and curve, creating a sense of movement and depth. The graphic is centered on the page and frames the central text.

"Never doubt that a small group
of thoughtful, committed citizens
can change the world; indeed
it's the only thing that ever has"

Margaret Mead

The Little Book of
Kindness

By Alex Killick, Debbie Watt and Joanna Suvarna



Firstly, a heartfelt thank you to Perry Timms for his act of kindness in giving Joanna the space on his own blog to write her thoughts back in May last year, the post was the ultimate catalyst for the creation of the **#BeTheRipple** movement.

With special thanks to:

The rest of the wonderful **#BeTheRipple** team: Asli Derya, Barbara Thompson, Gethin Nadin, Jayne Adamson, Jennifer Sullivan, Jenny Streeter, Martin Baker, Sarah Parrott, Shakil Butt, Sharon Green and Steve Browne.

The lovely people who contributed to our Twitter callout: Selena Govier, Kirsty Diamond, Lorna Leeson, Sam Jenniges, Stella Collins, Anna Edmondson, Paula Shields, @RegainHumanity, Karen Gilmore, Sherri Edwards, Jayne Harrison, Paula Shiels, Zoe Lewis, @MrsVeriTea, Sammantha Worboys, Claire Towne, Emma Stewart-Rigby, Valentina Hynes, Carol Brooksbank, Alan Williams, Cheri Brenton, Kyle Lane, Jack Poulton, Mike Sladen, @feastsandfables, @AitchAre1, Doug Shaw, Marcia Robinson.

*Thank!
@you.*

Foreword

This little book of kindness is just that, a little book , it doesn't have all of the answers. We don't think we need all of the answers to be kinder. We can just start from now and that will send out ripples that have no logical end.

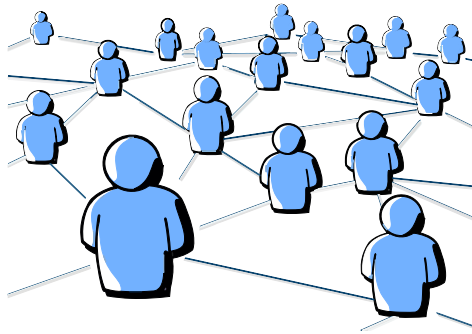
During the Coronavirus pandemic we have seen extraordinary acts of kindness, the simple things like:



Clapping for carers



Shopping for neighbours



Maintaining and creating meaningful connections



Donating money

Charitable work



We have seen some of this enlightenment in workplaces too and we believe that taking a kinder approach to people, with more empathetic leadership, more flexible practice and more care and consideration for the wellbeing of employees, more can be achieved in terms of business performance and positive outcomes.

#BeTheRipple is a movement born in the pandemic, we are on a mission to make the world of work a better place. Keep reading if you want to find out more about what we believe and what we can all do to make a difference.



Our Vision: A Kinder Working World For Us All



We aim to provide light for a kinder working world, creating people-powered change through collaboration. Our ultimate goal is for organisations to be free from unkindness.

We believe organisations that wish to achieve sustainable results in an ethical way will have a people-centric approach, showing care for all stakeholders and putting kindness at the core of everything they do.


K	KIN - treat employees as family, as human beings, not merely as job roles.
I	INTENTION - consciously kind
N	NO NONSENSE - allow people to be their authentic selves
D	DIVERSITY - embrace and celebrate differences
N	NOTICING - notice how people are, give employees a voice, actively listen and act on feedback
E	EXPECTATIONS - set high standards and expect every member of the organisation to do the same
S	STRETCH KINDLY - actively encourage personal development
S	SPEAK KINDLY - speak kindly and give feedback to others in a constructive way

Most organisations would claim these principles as part of their operating system, but the evidence suggests that not all organisations practice what they preach. What we know, however, is that the cost of unkindness in the workplace has a significant cost for business as well as employees.


The Cost of Unkindness



We know from the literature that there are various costs associated with incivility, workplace bullying and harassment at work. Some of the data are pretty stark, for example:

 12.8 million working days were lost in the year 2018-2019 in the UK due to work-related stress, depression or anxiety. (Health and Safety Executive).

 Workplace bullying and harassment was found to be the biggest workplace issue after stress (TUC, 2018).

 Depression and anxiety cost the global workforce an estimated \$1 trillion in lost productivity every year (World Health Organization).

And when you add the indirect costs and impact on the bottom line....

Direct Costs

- Reduced employee productivity
- Sickness absence
- Recruitment and training cost

Indirect Costs

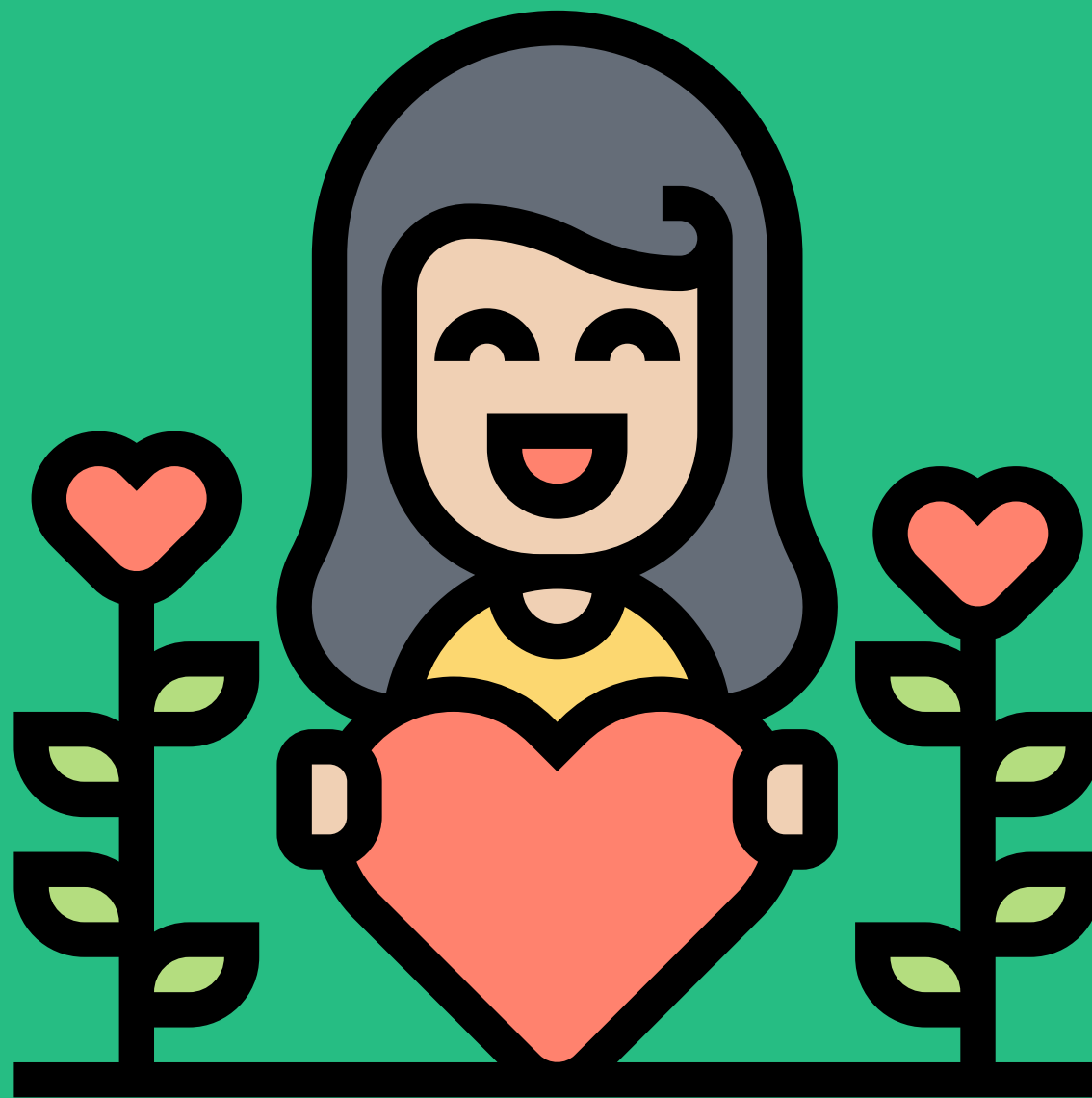
- Damaging organisational culture
- Negative effect on employee wellbeing
- Negative impact on families and wider community
- Less attractive to potential employees

Revenue Impacts

- Reduced customer satisfaction
- Reputational damage to organisation and brand

...we believe there is a compelling business case for kindness. However, bullying and harassment behaviours exist in organisations large and small and we find toxic workplaces in every sector. So, if we know unkindness costs a lot, why are the interventions and the public commitments to tackle bad behaviours in the workplace not having the impact we need to see?

We believe that despite the evidence of the problem, the current deficit approach to fix unkindness at work is not working. In our Little Book we argue for an asset or abundance based approach, where we highlight what kindness looks and feels like and seek to spread it. We'll talk about what we know about kindness, set out our case for more kindness at work, informed by what the research tells us



So, what do we know about kindness?

On February 9th 2021 we partnered with the Global Values Alliance for an event as a precursor to Random Acts of Kindness Day. The event was a deep dive conversation around kindness as a value and brought hearts and minds together to explore the many layers of kindness. In the session different interpretations of kindness were put forward and discussed. We came to the conclusion that kindness has overlaps with so many other values, does not stand entirely alone and can be subjective, meaning different things to different people.



We know positive human connections are the cornerstone to effective wellbeing and key to effective performance. Kindness is the engine.



We know that most people, deep down, are pretty decent. (Rutger Bregman Human Kind – A Hopeful History)



There is a growing body of evidence that good leadership is synonymous with kind leadership.



We know that unkindness costs a lot and kindness costs nothing.



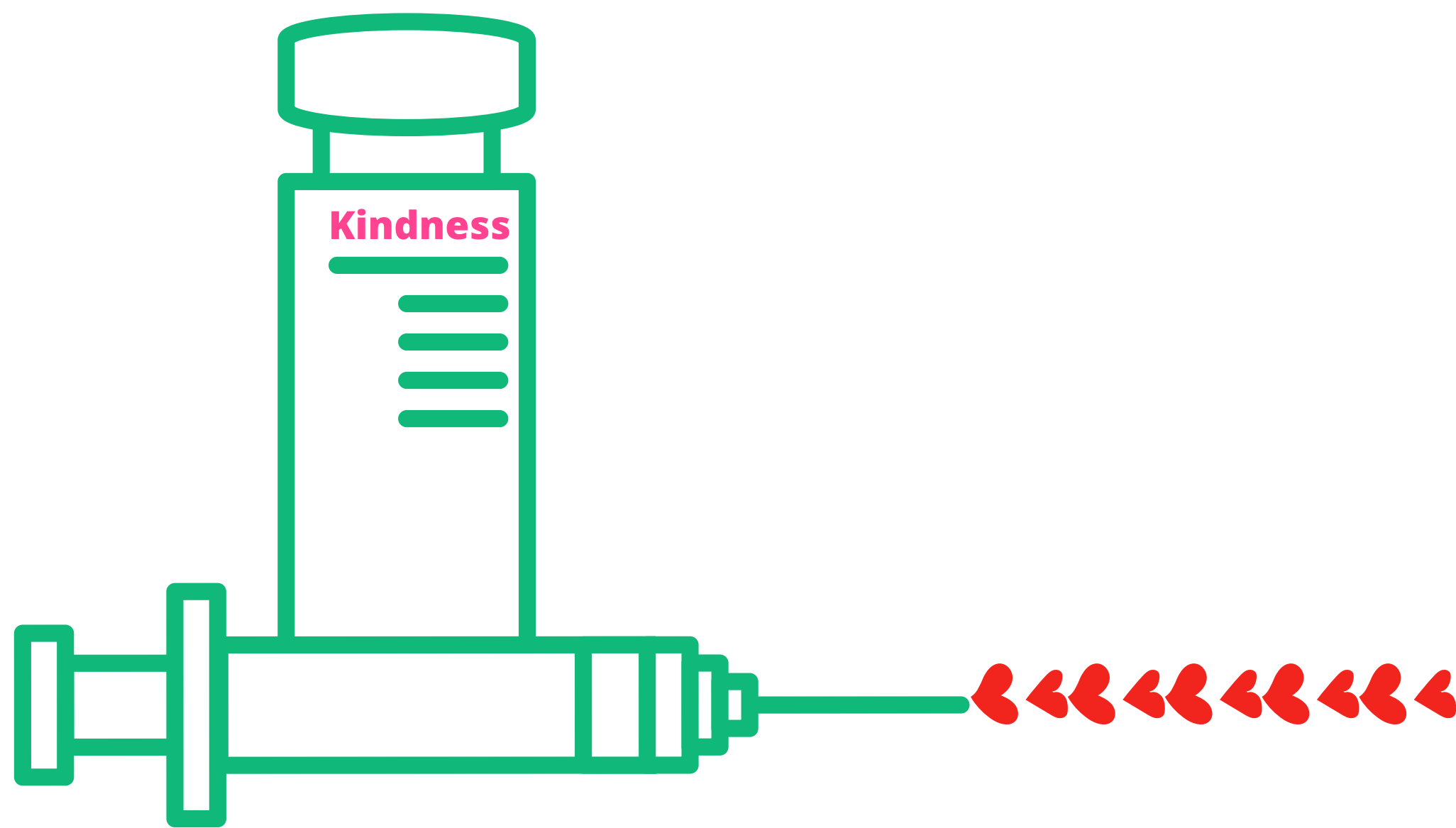
We know the global pandemic has been the catalyst for an eruption of kindness, but we need to understand whether it offers anything different to related concepts like care, compassion, civility, empathy, dignity, and respect, and to explore whether kindness is more than just the absence of bullying or incivility at work.

Making the Case for Kindness



MAKING THE CASE FOR KINDNESS

We believe that injecting more kindness into workplaces will help to address the issue of bullying and harassment in organisations as well as helping to reduce work-related stress, depression and anxiety.








Raising awareness is one of the guiding principles for #BeTheRipple and we are convinced that if organisations take time to consider how policies, processes and relationships can be kinder at all levels, there will be a positive impact on the organisation's culture and also, crucially, on the bottom line.

Let's look at what some of the research says.....

Scientific evidence shows us the positive effects of doing kind acts for others as well as receiving or even witnessing kindness



Scientific evidence shows that kindness can:

-  Reduce stress.
-  Raise happiness levels, increasing oxytocin and serotonin.
-  Reduce high blood pressure and improve heart health.
-  Increase energy levels.
-  Reduce pain and symptoms of depression.

Dartmouth College (2021)

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

The US Chamber of Commerce (n.d) cites various research studies and the combined findings assert that there are “many ways in which initiatives in kindness and compassion provide a competitive edge”, including:

Fosters trust within an organisation

Assists in talent recruitment

Heightens employee engagement and commitment

Fuels learning and innovation

Promotes high-quality service and brand loyalty

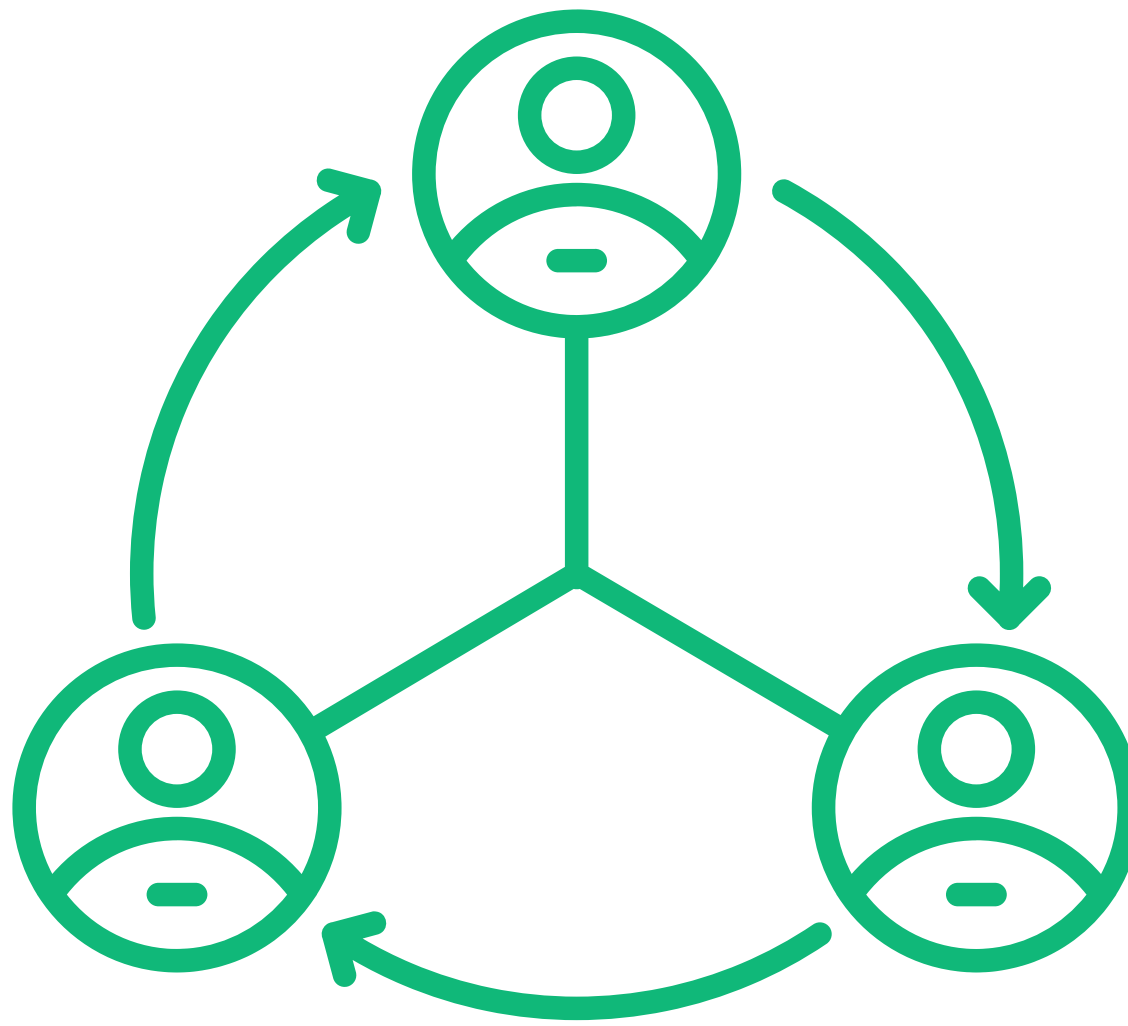
Improves business performance

The evidence from the study demonstrates that kindness can ripple out in our organisations, having an impact on prosocial behaviours and a strong link with overall happiness in the short-term and also in the longer-term.

Survival of the kindest



This idea of compassion being impactful is also believed to be central to thriving in humans, what according to Dacher Keltner (2018) using Darwin refers to as the 'survival of the kindest', rather than the received wisdom of survival of the fittest. The Covid-19 pandemic is forcing a fundamental rethink of how and where work gets done with perhaps a once in a generation opportunity to change how organisations are led – more collaboratively rather than being more competitive.



We think there is a real case to be made for more kindness at work that is good for individuals, good for business and good for GDP (although we might argue for a better economic measure - but not in this Little Book)

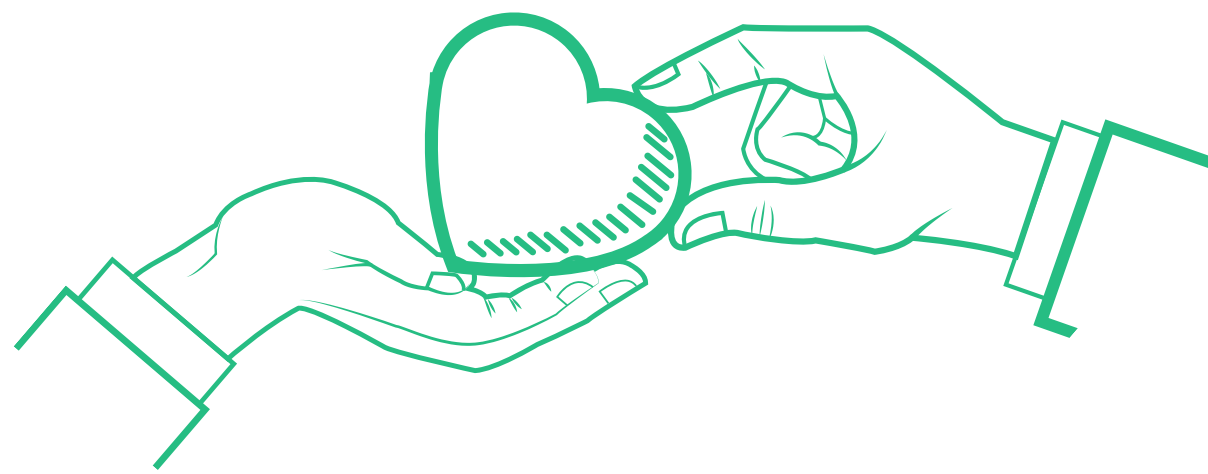
The Ripple Effect

A study that was undertaken by Chancellor et al. in 2018 had participants intentionally performing acts of kindness for others in the workplace, their findings were published in the American Psychological Association's journal. The study found that ...

“

...Givers and Receivers mutually benefited in well-being in both the short-term (e.g., on weekly measures of competence and autonomy) and the long-term (e.g., Receivers became happier after 2 months, and Givers became less depressed and more satisfied with their lives and jobs). In addition, Givers' prosocial acts inspired others to act: Receivers paid their acts of kindness forward with 278% more prosocial behaviors than Controls.

”



The evidence from the study demonstrates that kindness can ripple out in our organisations, having an impact on prosocial behaviours and a strong link with overall happiness in the short-term and also in the longer-term.

We also know that #buildingbackbetter will be tricky, but we believe that building and retaining a culture of kindness is a key. Key for attraction and retention, key for engagement and wellbeing, key for performance and key for reputation.

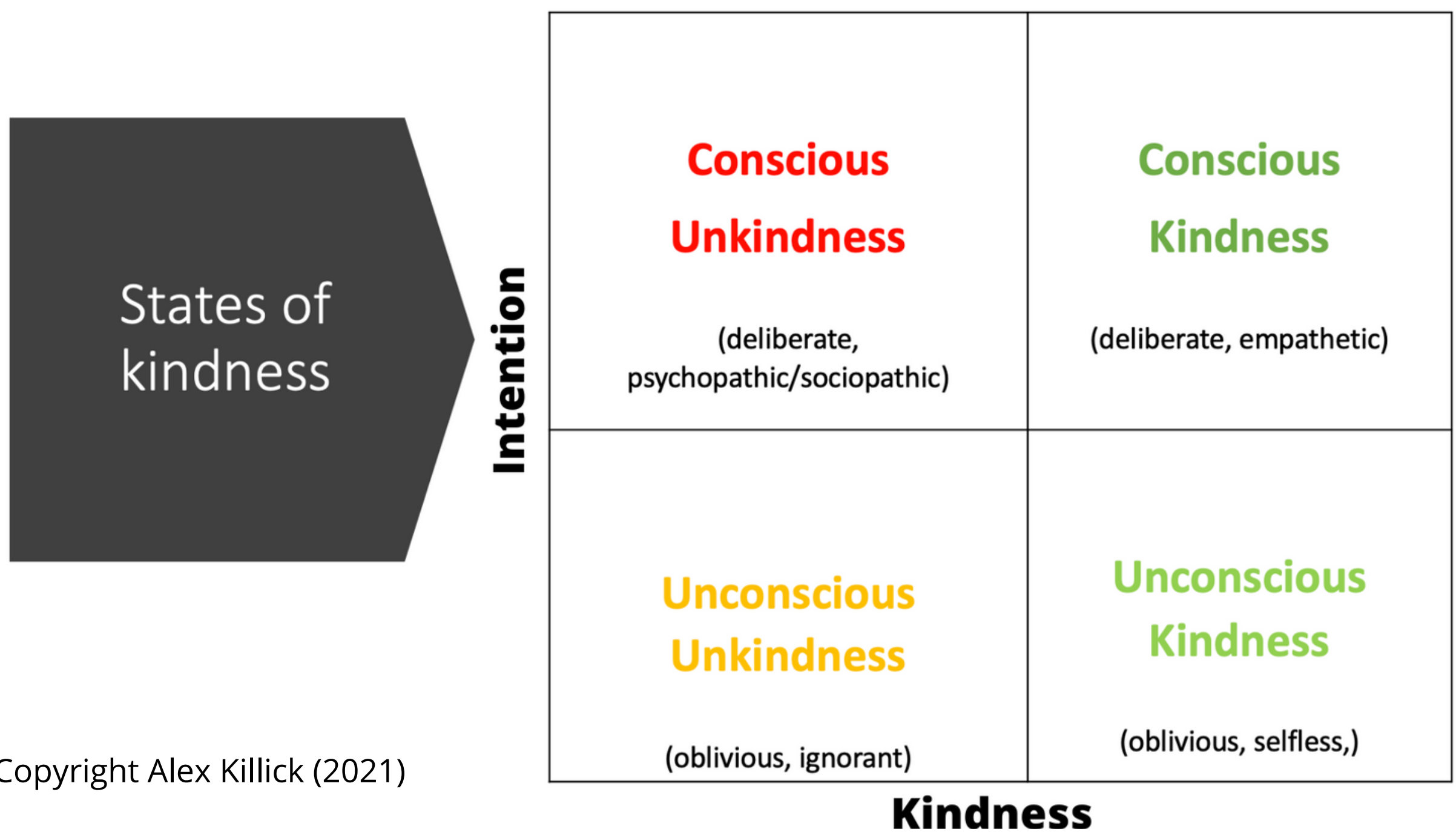
We believe that such is the interest in the #BeTheRipple movement that there is a growing appetite for building kinder workplaces, but as yet we don't have any silver bullets. In truth there probably aren't any, but together we could design a better operating system for kindness at work.

A Kindness at Work Operating System



WHAT MIGHT A KINDNESS AT WORK OPERATING SYSTEM LOOK LIKE?

Most of us have experience of kindness – as givers or receivers and often both. But often people mistake acts of kindness as ‘being nice’. Just to be clear kindness is about intention, it’s active and it’s conscious. Equally, unkindness can also be about intention, and be active and conscious. The model below shows a simplistic representation of kindness to illustrate the positive state of kindness where there is more intention. This idea of conscious kindness is at the heart of our operating system for kindness at work.



The operating system suggests that more needs to be done to take oxygen away from the left side and that more attention should be given to the right side. We know this isn't easy and to illustrate how challenging this is, we have created an adaptation of unconscious unkindness in action.....



Unconscious Unkindness in Action (*bingo*)

	I'm too busy	I don't have time to help	We've all got work to do	They're not the only one off with stress
	It's not my responsibility	It was funny	It's company policy	They should have said they were struggling
	I didn't want to make things worse	I'm stressed out too	I wasn't being serious	I've got my own job to do
	It's management's responsibility	I'm too busy to get in touch	They're too depressing to talk to	I was having a bad day

Debbie Watt (2020)

We suggest taking a three-pronged approach to carrying out an 'unkindness audit' on our own behaviours within the workplace:

**Things you don't do...
Why not?**

**Things you do...
Why might they be perceived as unkind?**

**Things you may not notice...
What should you know?**



Debbie Watt (2020)

This approach could also be used when looking at the policies, processes and relationships within organisations, enabling you to truly consider the impacts that each are having on your people and how that might need to be adapted to foster a kinder working environment.

We all like to think that we are kind people and that we are doing everything we can to be kind in our interactions with others at work. It is likely that most of us hold beliefs such as:



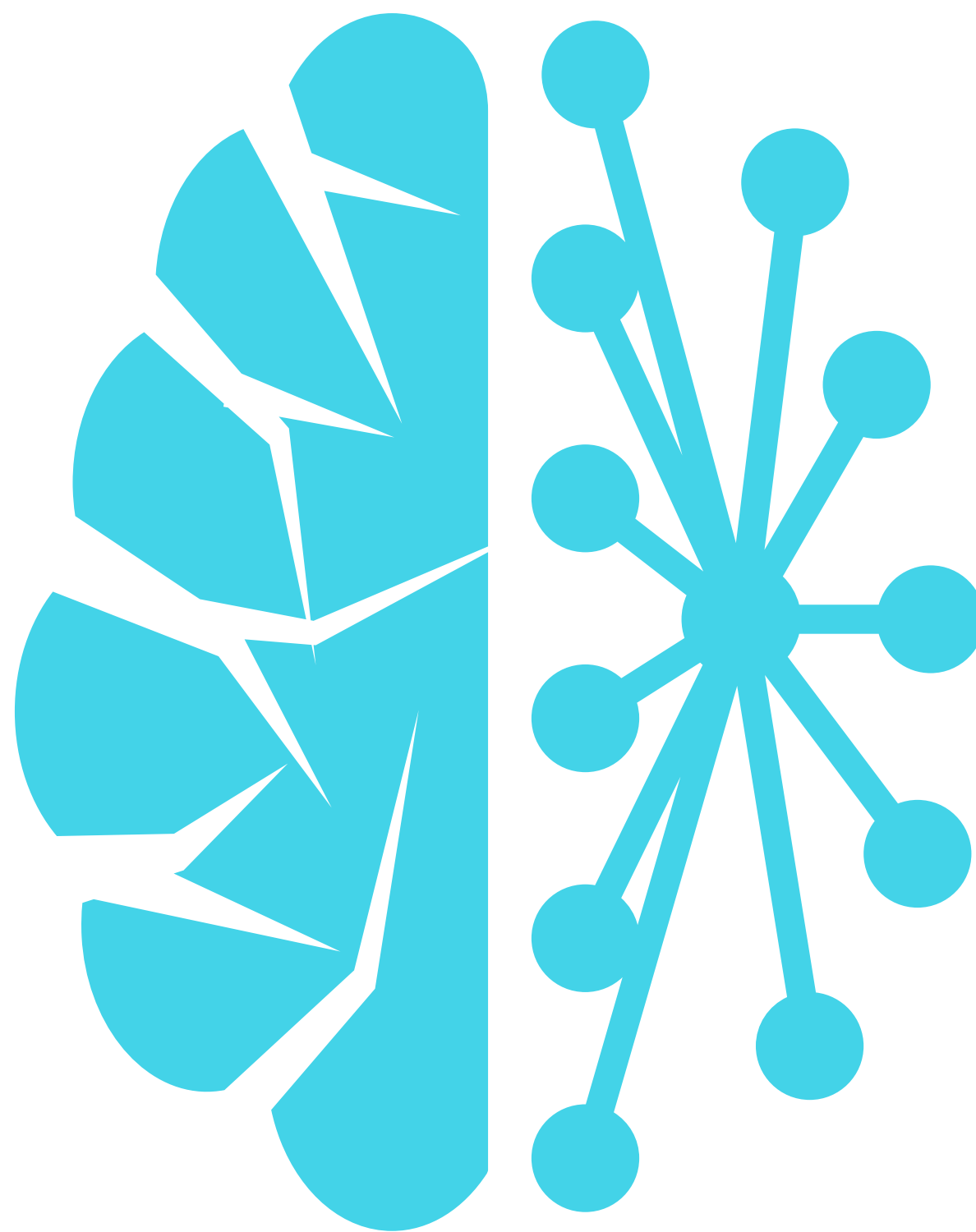
We'd urge you to take another look at our 'unconscious unkindness in action' table and be totally honest with yourself, have you perhaps been unintentionally unkind for some of the reasons highlighted? Kindness at work starts with each of us.

We believe that kindness to others begins with us showing kindness to ourselves, whether that be through exercise, meditation, better sleep or anything else that helps us to feel good. Siegle (2020) asserts: kinder self-talk and practicing gratitude can be a good start in our self-kindness journey.



He goes on to say that taking action is key to our growth and simply asking ourselves “How am I going to practice kindness today?” can be helpful - “This positive focus is like planting positive seeds in your mind garden. Where focus goes, energy flows.”

The great news is that kindness is teachable, so we can all learn to be more focused on bringing more kindness, and therefore happiness, into our workplaces and our lives. Josipovic (2020) states that: “Research in the field of contemplative neuroscience has shown that kindness and related competencies can be trained, resulting in both functional and structural neural plasticity.”



So what are you waiting for? What will you do to intentionally bring more kindness into your workplace and into your life?

CAN WE CO-CREATE A PRACTICAL OPERATING MODEL FOR KINDNESS AT WORK?

We wanted to crowdsource what kindness at work actually means in practical terms so we posted the question out to the #BeTheRipple kindness collective on Twitter.



We got so many wonderful responses and we wanted you to be able to easily access them yourself, so we've created a Wakelet of all responses. You can access the Wakelet by scanning this QR code:



Huge thanks to everyone who contributed to our discussion.

CONCLUSION AND A CALL FOR ACTION

We hope you have found our little book of kindness interesting, informative and maybe even a little inspiring. What is clear is that we all have the capacity to be and to do kind. We all feel the benefits of being kind to others and feel the benefit on our mood, wellbeing and motivation when others are kind to us (and to others).

keep
CALM
& be
KIND

We also believe that a little bit more kindness at work could go a long way to reduce those extraordinary costs of unkindness, improve performance and outcomes for individuals and organisations.

WE believe the future is bright and the future is kind. We just need to find a way of encouraging more 'conscious kindness' and in that vein, we have a few favours to ask while you are here:



Please like (or even better love and share) this little book when you have received and read it.



Tell us what you think. Be kind but be honest, we have broad shoulders!



Tweet us your top 3 tips for creating more conscious kindness at work (@BeTheRipple2020)

We are exploring in our research how we can measure kindness empirically (and whether it can and should be measured) but on the basis of what gets measured gets done, we think this is worth some consideration.

We would love to hear from you, and even better we would love you to join our growing movement and help us change the world of work for the better. You can find us on Twitter and Instagram @BeTheRipple2020 and on LinkedIn search for 'Be The Ripple'.

Scan the QR code to take a look at our website and find out more about how you might get involved.



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About the authors



Alex Killick BA PG Dip. MA(HRM) MIoD CFCIPD Director at Leading Kind

Prior to starting his business and becoming Co-Founder of #BeTheRipple in 2020, Alex held a number of executive board level and senior HR roles in the NHS, Scottish Government and Higher Education. He has also held a number of non-executive positions and is currently on the board of Edinburgh College. When not home schooling and walking the dog he is undertaking a professional doctorate examining the case for kindness at work.



Deborah R Watt MSc BSc (hons) assoc.CIPD MAC MBPSS assoc.MISCP Managing Director of Bridgeborne Psychology and Co- Founder of #BeTheRipple

Debbie is a Business and Coaching Psychologist who specialises in wellness, work performance and professional development. With over 17 years' experience in supporting individuals and teams through one-to-one coaching and training interventions, Debbie has demonstrated her passion for supporting people to thrive and achieve their chosen goals no matter what their current situation and challenges are.

Outside of work, Debbie enjoys painting, gardening and walks with her husband and their three crazy terriers.



Joanna Suvarna BA. (HRM), PGCE (PCET), MLPI, Assoc.CIPD Founder and Chief Kindness Officer at #BeTheRipple

A qualified HR, L&D professional and Teacher/Lecturer for the post-compulsory education and training sectors. Over 30 years' experience of working in different roles and sectors both in the U.K and in South Korea.

Passionate about fairness, equality, kindness, care, ethical practice, anti-bullying and anti-racism in workplaces. Strongly believes that every individual should be able to live their purpose in the work they do, without being subjected to inequality, harassment, bullying or unkindness of any type.



“Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.”

Robert F. Kennedy
Day of Affirmative Address - June 6, 1966

Providing Light for a Kinder Working World



Be the Ripple



@BeTheRipple2020