

So much of what we value is preserved by, and compatible with, kindness. We can be kind and successful; kind and exciting; kind and wealthy; and kind and potent. Kindness is a virtue awaiting our rediscovery and our renewed, unconflicted appreciation.



The kind person works with a picture of us that is generous and complex enough to make us more than just a label. They do not - as they easily could - simply dismiss us as 'fool' or 'weirdo', 'failure' or 'loser'.



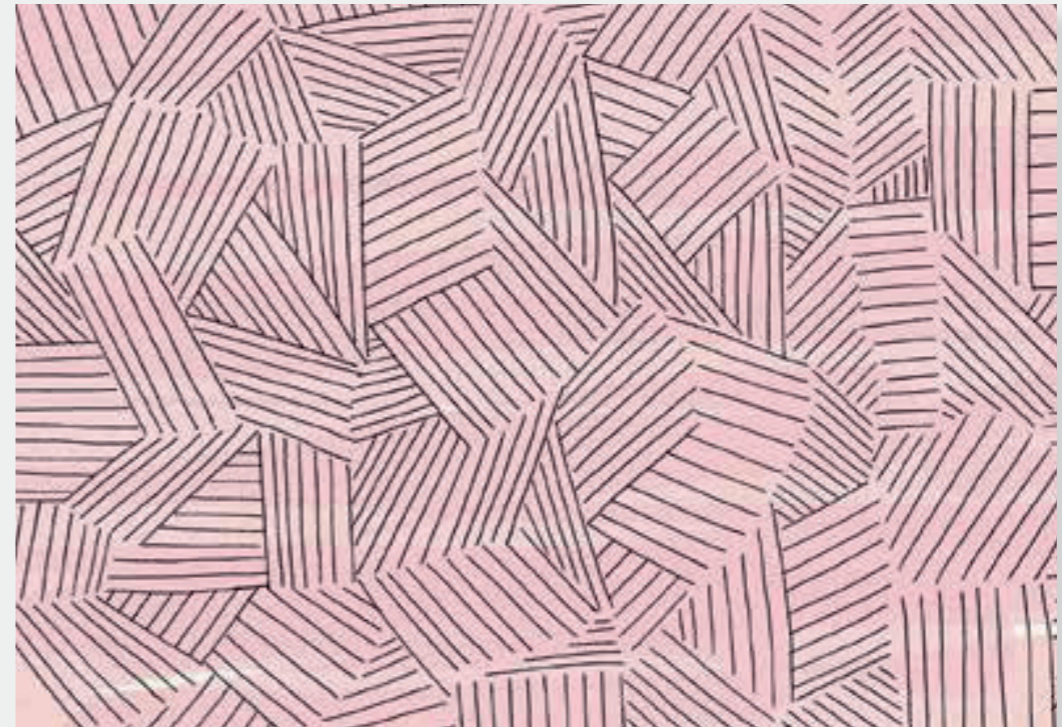
The kind person gives generously from a sense that they too will stand in need of kindness. Not right now, not over this, but in some other area. They know that self-righteousness is merely the result of a faulty memory: an inability to hold in mind, at moments when they are truly good and totally in the right, how often they have been deeply and definitively in the wrong.



We should strive to see people's weaknesses as the inevitable downside of certain merits that drew us to them, and from which we will benefit at other points (even if these benefits are not apparent right now). What we're seeing are not their faults, pure and simple, but rather the shadow side of aspects that are genuinely good about them. We are picking up on weaknesses that derive from strengths.



The modern world is very uncomfortable around the idea of a good person not succeeding. We would rather say that they weren't good than embrace a far more disturbing and less well-publicised thought: that the world is very unfair. Kind people always keep the notion of injustice in mind.



The greatest kindness we can bestow on others in difficult moments is to treat them as if they were children. We rarely feel personally agitated or wounded by the bad behaviour of small children, because we don't assign negative motives or mean intentions to them. We reach around for the most benevolent interpretations. We forgive.



Kind people know that great truths ('I really like you') sometimes have to pass into the mind of another person via a smaller falsehood ('your cake was delicious').

I REALLY
LIKE YOU

The kind person is a good listener who doesn't moralise. They know their own minds well enough not to be surprised or frightened by strangeness. They know how insane we all are; that is why we can feel comfortable about being heard by them. They give the impression of accepting, without bitterness or censure, that human beings in general are endearingly loopy.



Kind people know that the existence of troublesome elements in others does not preclude the simultaneous presence of vast zones of goodness, humility and benevolence. They know that everyone's right to charity, attention and friendship should not be irrevocably lost on the basis of some darker elements. Kind people take it for granted that decent humans constantly do and think not very nice things.



Kind people know that friendship begins, and loneliness can end, when we cease trying to impress, have the courage to step outside our safety zones and dare - for a time - to look a little ridiculous.

