Healthy Conflict, 4.1: Niceness vs Kindness

Summary

- We are often good at being nice: avoiding awkwardness and looking after people's immediate emotional needs. This comes at a cost - it means we ignore longer-term benefits, and avoid difficult but important conversations.
- Kindness is the alternative - it still cares, but isn't scared to ruffle a few feathers or name hard truths in the name of long-term good.
- Niceness happens at work all the time: in the feedback we give (and don't give); in the avoidance of conflict and criticism; and in the things we don't say. As a result, important truths remain unheard.
- It's important that we learn to name these things: compassionately, with care, and kindly.

Exercises

1) What's your take on nice vs kind? Does it resonate, or do you disagree?

2) To what extent is your team/ workplace nice, kind, or something else?

3) Think about your most recent working week. Are there examples of you being 'nice' (eg. avoiding raising issues out of fear of upsetting someone; pretending things are okay to be agreeable)? What impact does that have on you? What impact does it have on others?

Resources and links:

- https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1059601108331218?download=true&journalCode=gomb Research paper demonstrating that task-based conflict is valuable for improving practice; it becomes difficult when it spills over into relational conflict. As such, approaches that are considerate and personable but willing to engage in difference seem to be the most productive.
- https://academic.oup.com/ajhp/article-abstract/77/21/1723/5895547?login=false Paper demonstrating the importance and impact of doing difficult conversations well in healthcare settings.

Evaluation:

We would really appreciate your feedback through these short questionnaires on the videos and their usefulness. Your feedback will help us improve future content.

Prior to watching the videos

After watching the videos