BE THE CHANGE: BE KIND

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Be The Change

BE KIND

Rise Up and Make a Difference to The World

MARCUS SEDGWICK

illustrated by THOMAS TAYLOR

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Introduction

My name is Marcus Sedgwick and over the last 20 years or so I've written a lot of books for young people. After a few years of this, someone pointed out that my books often tended to have protagonists who were kind and decent people, but who found themselves in difficult situations. That started me thinking about why I had felt drawn to do that (because it wasn't then a conscious choice) and it didn't take Sigmund Freud to figure out why. I also started to study kindness; what we mean by it, where it comes from and so on. Put simply, this book you now hold in your hands is the book I wish I had had when I was young. That's because I found the other kids around me at school, and even the teachers sometimes, to often be very cynical and unkind, even cruel. This was the eighties, the era when selfishness was turned into a good thing; when slogans like "greed is good" were born, and when we were being told on all sides to "look out for number one" and "nice guys finish last". I often tried to argue with my friends that there was a better way, but I didn't know how; I didn't have the tools.

This book, I hope, is that tool.

How to use this book

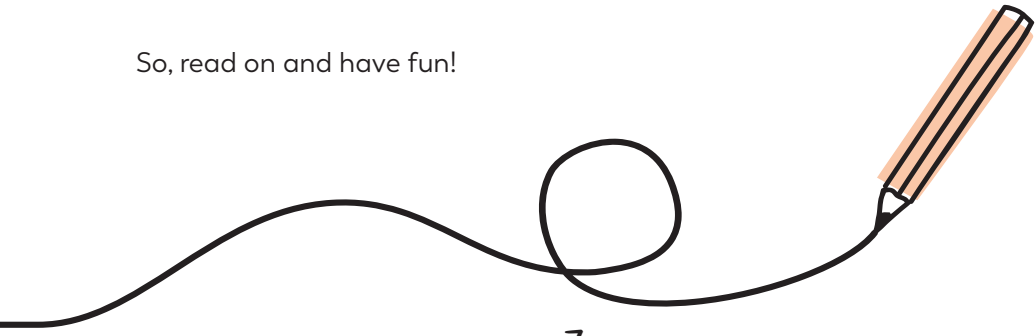
This book is for you. You're a nice person. I know that you are. How do I know that? For one thing, because you've picked up a book about kindness, and you already want to know more. Secondly, because, as we'll see later, kindness is built into all of us, from before we're even born. You might already be thinking of people you know who don't seem so nice, but that's almost always because they are reacting to bad things that have happened in their life. And how do we get past the bad things that happen in life? Well, one really important way is with understanding and love. In a single word, with kindness!

So, this is a book that will show you why kindness is so important and how to argue that point with anyone who's not so convinced.

It's a simple book about a deceptively complex subject and I hope you're going to find the subject as fascinating as I do.

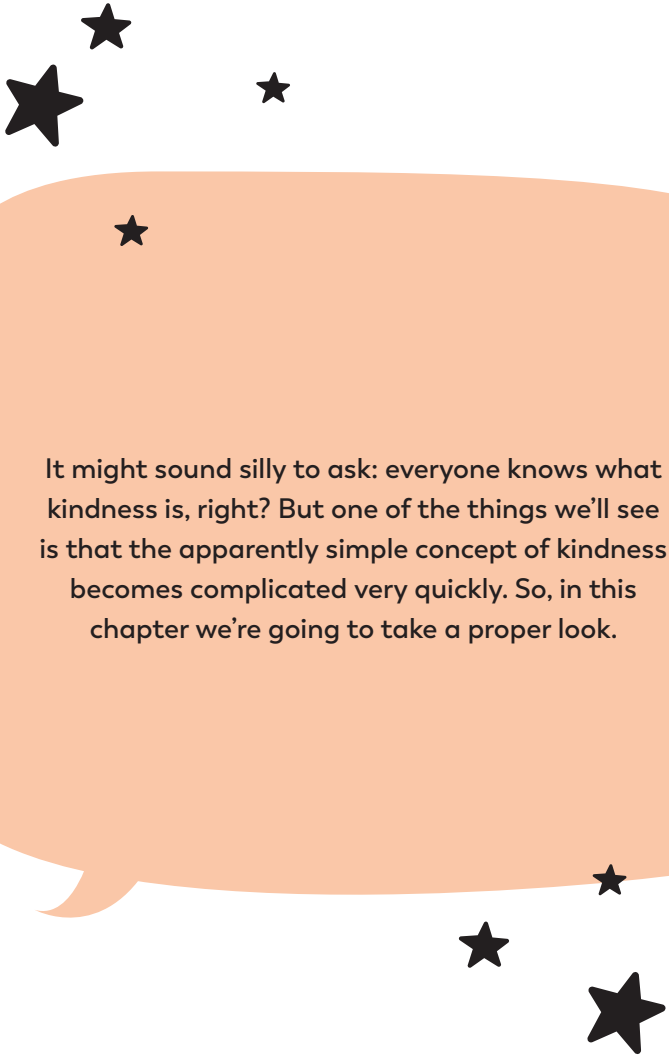
It's best to read it from the beginning to the end, as we're going to be following a story of kinds. But, of course, you can always go back and reread any sections that were hard to understand the first time around, or any bits that you want to really remember.

So, read on and have fun!



Chapter 1

What is kindness?

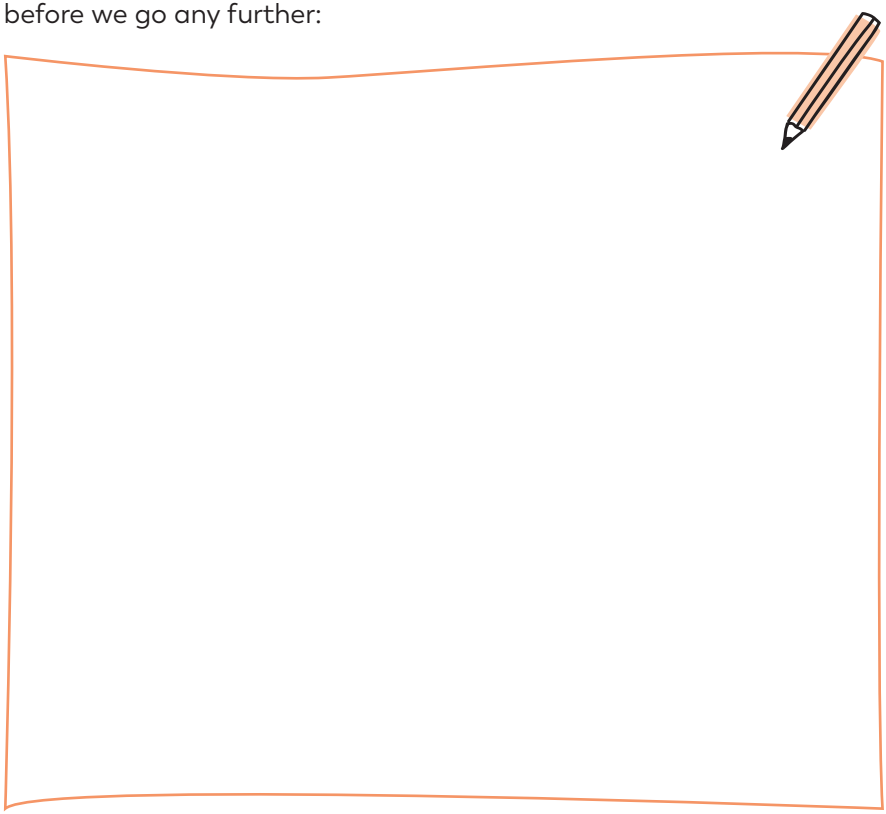


It might sound silly to ask: everyone knows what kindness is, right? But one of the things we'll see is that the apparently simple concept of kindness becomes complicated very quickly. So, in this chapter we're going to take a proper look.

What do we even mean by kindness?

It's such an everyday notion that maybe we never stop to think what it means, *exactly*. But since this whole book is about it, we ought to know what we're talking about.

Why don't you write down what you think kindness is? Do it right here, before we go any further:



Did you find that easy?

Now, let's see what the dictionary says, and see if it's anything like what you've written!

> Kindness - the quality of being disposed to do good to others.

This is a bit of a mouthful, but that's why words exist – so we have one word and not a whole sentence to say something we all understand.

Or *think* we understand, at least, because one of the things we're going to discover in this book is that the question of kindness is much more complicated than we might think.

Before we go on, here's another question for you, and it's a big one...




HOW KIND
ARE YOU?

"KINDNESS:
A language

which the
dumb can
SPEAK

and the
deaf can
UNDERSTAND."

Christian Nestell Bovee

How do you feel about kindness?

1. **It's really important. The world needs as much of it as possible.**
2. **It's a nice idea in principle and everyone should try to be kind but you have to look after yourself first and foremost.**
3. **What's the point? Everyone is basically selfish, so it makes sense to be selfish too. It's a "dog-eat-dog world"*.**
4. **Or maybe you have some other opinion? This is a big subject after all!**

*You might have heard people use this expression. It means they think that people behave the way wild animals do; i.e. if you don't eat "the other dog", the "other dog" will eat you. We'll look at this more later, because people who think this might just have the wrong idea about the animal kingdom.

If so, write it in here (or even sketch it!):



Have a think about yourself

Do you often act with kindness towards others? Who does your kindness extend to? Which one of the below best describes you? If none of them do, write in what you feel about yourself at the end.

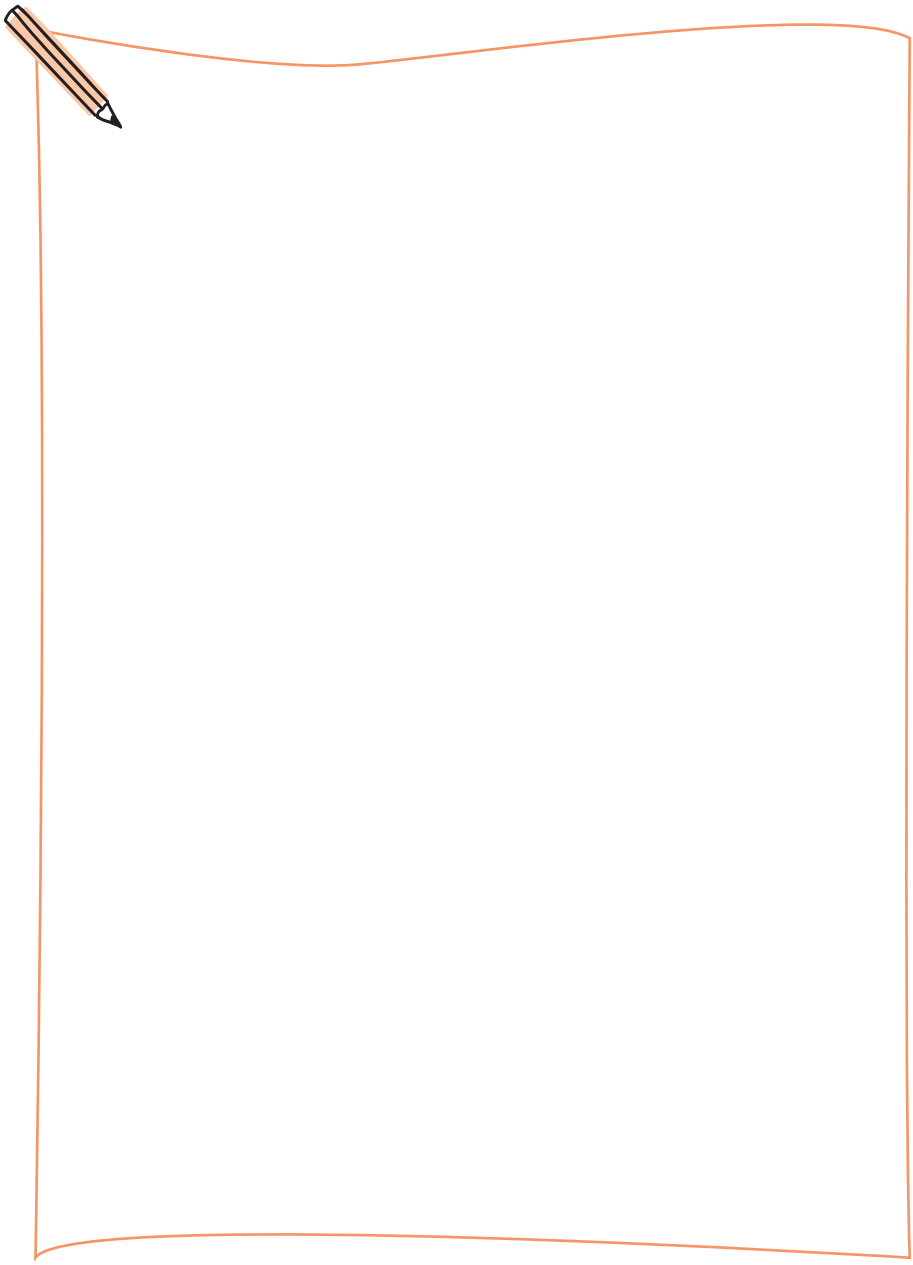
1. **I am kind to everyone, as much as I possibly can be anyway: family, friends and strangers.**

2. **I try to be kind, and although I'm not an angel, I'm generally kind to my family and friends. But strangers? Not so much.**

3. **I don't see why I should be kind to people. But if they do something good for me, then I might help them another time.**

4. **I don't bother with kindness. It's a waste of time; it's only for losers. The world is tough and the sooner you get used to that the better.**

5. **Or, try to write a description of your own attitude to kindness here...**



Great! Now we have some idea of what kindness is, and how you feel about it.