

Does it kill you to be a bit kinder?

It's World Kindness Day tomorrow and **Monica Cafferky** spent 24 hours being nice to everyone she met, so is it really that hard to always be cheerful?

A few days ago I reversed down a country lane to let a BMW driver past and he didn't say thank you. I know it's not very nice, but I couldn't resist flicking him the V-sign.

Afterwards I felt guilty. I shouldn't have lost my cool - even if Mr BMW was rude.

So when I heard that it was World Kindness Day I wondered if I could spend a whole day being kind to strangers. Here's my diary...

WALKING THE DOG

Every morning I take my dog, Tilly, for a walk and say hello to other walkers as I go.

Today, I'm going one step further and I've filled my pockets with biscuits for their pooches.

Not long after I enter the field a beagle appears.

Holly takes the dog biscuit gently and lets me pat her, which is lovely.

I chat with Holly's owner, Angela, and within minutes we swap names and I tell her about my day of

kindness. She says if people are kind, it's reflected in their behaviour.

IN THE SUPERMARKET

Next stop is Tesco, where I usually rush around, chucking things into my trolley. But as I walk down an aisle today I see a woman pondering the eggs and offer to help.

She introduces herself as Mavis, I then reach for a packet and check none of the eggs is broken.

We chat and look for caster sugar together - and I feel like I'm being a better person.

AT THE CHECKOUT

I let a stranger go before me and

again strike up a conversation.

Pam tells me she talks to everyone. She believes it's important to be kind because what you give out, you get back. I agree, although I hadn't expected to discuss karma at the checkout in Tesco!

What an interesting day this is turning out to be.

ON THE HIGH STREET

I'm about to dash into Marks & Spencer when I stop and open the door for the person behind me. She gives me a huge smile and says thank you. I smile back and think: 'This being kind to strangers lark really does make you feel good'.

WAITING AT THE CASH MACHINE

I offer to let someone go before me at the cash machine and experience my first negative reaction - an odd



look. Perhaps they think I'm involved in a scam? I make a mental note - kindness doesn't work in a bank.

ON THE TRAIN

I head to Leeds and on the way home finish my book. I ask the person behind me if they would like it. She looks suspicious and asks, "For no money?" and I nod. The woman, Alice, says: "Thank you, how nice." We start a conversation about books. Alice recommends some good novels that I've not heard of before.

HUGGING A HOODIE

As I walk to my car I notice a group of young guys in the square. To some people they could look intimidating. I go over and offer a free hug. One

of the group, Ryan, immediately says, "I'll have one" and we embrace for a moment. Suddenly, we're all laughing and his mates start teasing him. They change from being hoodies to just young lads. My perception of them has been challenged, which is good.

DRIVING HOME

I practise the 'art of giving way' and some drivers acknowledge my kindness while others ignore me.

Suddenly, I realise I am responsible just for my own kindness and not for other people's.

What's important is that I'm being kind and I shouldn't expect to receive anything in return.

CHARITY DONATION

Before home I drop off a coat in the charity bin and I have another realisation - you don't have to see the person you're kind to, you just have to put the act of kindness into the world.

THE CALL CENTRE

Back home, I usually find it hard to keep my temper with call centre operators, but this time I promise I'm going to be calm and kind and it's easier than I think. I pass this revelation on to my partner: "So how about giving me £100?" he asks.

"I'm feeling kind, Sunshine, but not that kind," I reply.

● FOR MORE INFORMATION ON WORLD KINDNESS DAY, VISIT WWW.KINDNESSDAYUK.COM



Kindness Is Good For You

Dr David Hamilton, author of *Why Kindness Is Good For You*, says: "Kindness is an attitude of mind. and as human beings we're genetically wired to be kind rather than cruel.

"There are so many ways you can be kind. Recently, I bought a coffee and left the change behind the till so the next person wouldn't have to pay for their drink. This is known as a Random Act of Kindness (RAK) and is a big philosophy in America.

"Kindness is also good for your

health. When you show someone kindness your body releases the hormone oxytocin, a chemical with the same effect on the brain as morphine and heroin. As well as making you feel good, it reduces the free radicals in the bloodstream, which are known to be a major cause of heart disease.

"So smiling at a stranger quite literally benefits your heart."



WHY KINDNESS IS GOOD FOR YOU,
HAY HOUSE, £9.99.



WALK AND TALK: Angela and Monica swap names





SWEETNESS AND LIGHT:
Mavis and Monica,
right, hunt for caster
sugar together



HUG A HOODIE:
Ryan and Monica

PICTURES: Ross Parry Agency

