



## Acts of Kindness

### Intentional Not Random

When referring to *Acts of Kindness*, many people are familiar with the additional term often placed at the start of the phrase: *Random*. I interpret the term 'random' to refer to an unplanned opportunity, possibly benefitting a random stranger and occurring at a random time in your day. I hope that we are all familiar with receiving, giving, and observing some acts of kindness – they can certainly light up a day! I have just noticed that I have a big smile on my face as I write this opening paragraph of this blog – just the effect of writing and thinking about acts of kindness has had a not-so-trivial positive impact on me. I am going to be on the lookout today for an opportunity to give a random act of kindness.

However, randomly, this is not where my blog is heading! In my work as an educational wellbeing consultant, I have the opportunity to support school communities in exploring the art and science of wellbeing. I deliver professional learning opportunities for teachers and school leaders to consider how they can provide an environment that promotes collective wellbeing. Just this week, I have been in Toronto, Canada, working with three leading schools, each with its own unique context, challenges, and opportunities. In a nutshell, I was supporting each school in being very intentional about how they could create and enable flourishing wellbeing environments.

At one particular school, over 200 staff members (teaching faculty and operational team members) were present for an entire day of professional learning. The three topics we explored throughout the day were: Kindness and Connection, Self-Regulation, and Adaptable Mindsets. As a cohort, we worked through the 40-page booklet, participated in activities, shared stories, laughed, cried, and connected.

Early in the day, one of the intentional fun activities was welcoming the new staff members to the school, of which there were 18. We went a step further than simply introducing their names, giving them a polite clap, and welcoming them to the school community. We intentionally went over the top in trying to learn the names of these new colleagues. With access to photos of these new staff members, the two large presentation screens flashed up photos, with names appearing after a short delay. The goal was for the collective group to call out the name of their new colleague before the name appeared on the screen. Photos appeared 'randomly' from all angles on the screen, in a 'random' order, sometimes only showing 'random' parts of their faces – and for six or seven minutes, we laughed, called out, and began memorising the names of these 18 new team members. It was all very random, and all very intentional.

I think of these 18 new colleagues starting at their new school this week in Toronto, and I hope that at least 100 staff members have mentioned their first name as they interacted today. I also hope that this experience has encouraged them to prioritise the learning of the many students they are about to connect with, care for, and educate in the future. Learning someone's name is important and can quite possibly be both a random and intentional act of kindness. Go well.