



Acts of Kindness

The Gentle Art of Compromise

This past weekend, Jeanette and I headed off with her two sisters, her brother, and everyone's partners – eight of us in a cosy house, a dodgy weather forecast, and plenty of time. The skies didn't play nice, but it hardly mattered. Conversations flowed. Meals stretched. A few rounds of table tennis got competitive (in a friendly way). Books were dipped into, crosswords attempted, stories swapped. When the rain lifted, we snuck out for short walks, a wander through the Sunday market, and a couple of cafés.

What struck me wasn't the itinerary; it was the spirit. Quietly, consistently, everyone compromised. Sometimes it was simple – read a few extra pages while others finished a puzzle. And sometimes it meant coordinating: when to eat, where to drive, who wanted another lap of the market, who didn't. Again and again, people yielded, adjusted, and went with the flow so the group could stay together.

On the drive home, I realised I'd been watching kindness in a different outfit. Each small compromise was a gentle vote of confidence in our relationships – a way of saying, "You matter; we matter." It wasn't grand or performative. It was soft-edged, steady, and deeply human.

In our book, we write that other people matter – full stop – and anything that builds relationships tends to increase our wellbeing. Compromise is one of those small, unglamorous builders. It signals trust. It nourishes connection. And it reminds us that being interdependent is stronger than being independent – that combining our efforts (and preferences!) can help us do life better together.

Step 6 in our 7-step process is The Connection Step. The core question there – *Who do I want to be known as?* – is a beautiful compass for weekends like this. I want to be known as someone who makes room, who flexes, who holds the collective gently. Compromise, in that light, becomes an everyday practice of identity: I am the kind of person who chooses "us" over "me" when it counts.

There's science behind the sentiment, too. The longest longitudinal study of adult life keeps landing on the same truth: relationships matter for health and happiness. But, like fitness, they need tending – time, effort, and yes, the occasional willingness to bend so we can stay in step with each other.

A small invitation

This week, consider your own gentle acts of compromise – at home, in your team, with friends. Notice when you choose to flex, and name it for what it is: a quiet act of kindness. If you'd like a nudge, revisit Step 6 and try sketching your social web or journalling a line on who you want to be known as in your closest roles. Sometimes clarity about *who* we aim to be makes the *how* surprisingly simple. Go well!