Ep #303: Why Being Nice Isn't Always Kind

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With Your Host

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If you want to do things differently but need some help making it happen, then tune in for your weekly dose of coaching from me, Maisie Hill, Master Life Coach and author of *Period Power*. Welcome to *The Maisie Hill Experience*.

Hello folks and welcome to episode 303. You will probably be able to hear that I have a cold at the moment. So, I'm summoning all my energy for a short but impactful episode for you because today I'm going to be talking to you about being nice and why being nice is a problem in my eyes, at least, and what a better alternative is.

These are what I would consider key themes for us to look at and work on continuously because people-pleasing and lack of boundaries have such a huge impact on your experience of your cycle, your ability to care for yourself and receive care from others. It impacts your quality of life, your sleep, your stress levels.

So not addressing these things is a recipe for burnout, for misery and also a lot of stored resentment in your mind and in your body. So, when we are doing all the people-pleasing and not having boundaries, this basically keeps your diary full of things that you have no desire to actually be doing which then, of course, holds you back from the things you do want to be doing. And they can even impact your earning potential

So that's what today is all about because I'm going to be talking about the difference between being nice and being kind. So, I really encourage you to let this one sink in, really let it sink in. Listen to it, let it percolate, listen to it again.

So, let's start off with the dictionary definitions of nice and kind. So nice means giving pleasure or satisfaction, and it can also mean pleasant or attractive, which you can see how that all relates to when you're being nice. And there are various descriptions of kind, including being helpful and considerate.

But the one that's relevant to our conversation today, and I feel gives the best representation of the word and the way that I would want it to be for

this conversation, is having, showing or proceeding from benevolence. So basically, being nice is all about other people's perception of you, wanting to be accepted and liked. And being kind means acting from benevolence which may not actually feel that nice.

So let me tell you about my interpretation of the difference between nice and kind. And this by the way came via a woman called Kris Plachy whose podcast I listen to. It used to be called Lead Your Team. And it's now called Leadership is Feminine. And Kris helps female founders and entrepreneurs to lead their team and to be CEOs. So, I was listening to it a lot earlier on this year. And I wish I could remember the episode where she talked about this one so that I could point you in the right direction, but I couldn't find it.

Anyway, this particular episode blew my mind because Kris was talking about the difference between being nice and being kind. And ever since I heard it, it's like my brain just opened up and I haven't stopped thinking about this difference and noticing it in my behaviour, talking about it with my colleagues, talking about it with my clients and relating it to their experiences too.

So, Kris basically said in this episode that if you had a member of your team and you were being nice you would be telling them that they're doing a great job even when they weren't, and you'd hold back on communicating clearly and honestly with them. Whereas if you were being kind in that same scenario, you would give them the feedback that they need in order to do their job well and for them to succeed in the role. So being nice might sound good to you and to the other person, those words might sound nice but it's not genuine.

And we do this because we want to avoid certain conversations because they feel uncomfortable or because we want to try and manage someone else's emotional wellbeing which other people's emotions can also feel very scary to us sometimes. And of course, you can't control someone else's emotional being. Why would you want to? But what ends up happening when we do this is it actually causes harm.

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So, you start off just trying to be nice and kind of look out for someone, but you end up causing harm and you cause harm to your relationship with them as colleagues. And it also impedes their ability to succeed in their role. But being kind can be harder because it requires honesty and that can feel risky especially if you're used to being nice and trying to please others. But being kind on the other hand is helpful, it's valuable. When someone isn't doing something that's key to their role, being nice about it is harmful, it's not helpful.

So, let's bring this around to your cycle. Being conditioned to be nice is very harmful to your cycle because you focus on pleasing others, you say yes to everyone and everything and forget about yourself in the process. And when you use all your energy to maintain a veneer of pleasantness, what happens is you get very resentful. You get frustrated and angry

And that's when we start to see symptoms emerge or existing symptoms worsen, like irritability, fatigue, rage, sleep issues. And physical pain as well like headaches, breast and chest tenderness, and period pain etc. And this all kind of comes together, especially when you look at things through the Chinese medicine lens of the cycle.

But the image that comes to my mind as I was considering this is someone who works in customer service and is working for a company that prioritises customer service to the detriment of its staff. And the person who's working in customer service has to keep smiling, and they have to keep being polite and nice even when the customer is treating them terribly. Now, in saying all of this, are there physiological reasons why your go-to place is being nice? 100%.

But when you're being nice, you're being polite and agreeable. You're being pleasing towards others. And it may feel very comfortable to you to be like this. In fact, it may feel really good to you, especially if you have a long history, as many of us will have of being praised for making other people feel good, and considering others, and being nice and polite, and always fucking smiling as I say in Period Power.

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And it also, let's face it, may feel like a relief because in your mind you think you've avoided a perceived conflict. But it will have negative consequences and often result in an actual conflict. So rather than say to someone, "You know, that work that you did wasn't to your usual standard", and then having a helpful conversation about it, but we say nothing which is not helpful to you or to them. It's also something that just goes untended, but it does get stored away. It can end up being ammunition in your workplace, but in your personal relationships too.

So maybe you have a friend or a romantic partner who does something that annoys you like whistling, which if I haven't told you already, for the record, I cannot stand. And instead of saying, "Hey, I don't like whistling, could you stop?" You say nothing and maybe you keep smiling, and so they have no idea that it's a problem for you. And so, they keep doing it, and doing it, and doing it until you snap and tell them exactly what you think of them and what they're doing. And then you may well have an actual conflict on your hands.

Now, it might feel very uncomfortable for you to ask someone to do something or not do something, especially if you're used to being last on the list. And of course other people will have responses too. They might not want to stop whistling. We can't control the other people in our lives very sadly. So, they might not want to stop whistling. And they might not think that their work was of a lower standard but that's okay because you'll be able to have those conversations without them being a big deal.

But can you see how exhausting and unhelpful being nice is? Being nice is performative. You have to use so much energy to try and suppress your actual thoughts and feelings and your behaviour in an effort to be seen as nice. It's costly.

And of course, we do this, we just want to fit in and be liked by others because in our evolutionary history if we didn't do that then we risked being excluded from our community. And we'd have had to go it alone out in the big bad wilderness which millions of years ago would have been very risky and would have led to certain death. So, no wonder it feels risky to be

honest and be kind. So, if you're kind of listening to this and thinking, oh yeah, I do this, this is me, I just want you to know that there are reasons why you do it. I mean really, it's no bloody wonder.

How many of us have been repeatedly rewarded and praised for being nice from a very young age? I know I was. But I don't want to be nice. Being nice is all tied up in external validation and what others think of you.

And often it involves doing things for others to the detriment of yourself and to their detriment too, whether we're talking about your colleague, your kids or your romantic partner. When you do things for them you probably do it to try and save them from something instead of being kind and just letting them figure out how to do it for themselves and to be responsible for themselves. And this all links back to the being overly responsible episode that I did a while back. We want the other humans in our lives to be responsible for themselves. It's the secret to us doing less.

The other problem with being nice is in how it relates to tone policing. Tone policing is a defensive and diversionary tactic that's used when someone doesn't like the content of what another person is saying. They don't like the words that are being spoken. So, what they do is they draw attention to the way in which those words were said, the tone of what was said.

It's a microaggression often, regularly, frequently experienced by Black women when they're told to calm down and to stop being so angry. That if they spoke in a nicer tone then what they're saying would be better received. And that's extremely problematic for so many reasons. So, there's multiple, multiple reasons why being nice isn't helpful. And being kind is often uncomfortable and it can feel hard. It can be a challenge to do it to begin with. But the more and more you flex that muscle of being kind instead of nice, the easier it gets, I promise you.

Being kind is honest and it's more valuable, it's how we can experience true connection with ourselves and with others. And it's how you learn that you are amazing and worthy exactly as you are. You don't have to pretend to be

anything or anyone other than yourself. And when you do this work it is incredibly freeing because you can just be yourself.

I want you to think about what your life would be like if you could be you, to stop looking outside for approval and to take responsibility for your own self-worth. Imagine what your relationships would be like, personal ones, professional ones, what would those relationships be like if you loved and accepted yourself as you are?

Okay my lovelies, I got through it without too much coughing. I'm going to go lie down. That is it for today. I'll catch you next week, hopefully without a cold.

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