

What We Do and Don't Know About Kindness

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Since the pandemic began, people tell me they've been thinking a lot more about kindness. Maybe they've noticed the mutual aid groups that have sprung up around the world to help during lockdowns, or perhaps it's because the cessation of normal everyday life has forced them to reconsider their values and what really matters in life.

Kindness might once have been considered something of a soft topic, but it has begun to be taken seriously within academic research. When developmental psychologist Robin Banerjee – who is leading a new study on kindness in partnership with the BBC – surveyed past research, he found just 35 papers on kindness in psychology journals in the whole of the 1980s. In the past decade, there were more than 1,000.

But there is still plenty to discover, so the BBC has just launched a huge online public science project called the [Kindness Test](#), in collaboration with a team from the University of Sussex in the UK. It's open now and many thousands of people from all over the globe have already completed it. The hope is that this research will start the process of obtaining a fuller picture of kindness in today's world.