

Kind Nutritious Conversations

In kind conversations we respond to a person's comment by asking to hear more, agreeing, making an encouraging comment, or offering interesting relevant information, by asking caring questions about what is important in the person's life, and by taking seriously the other person's opinions and preferences. All these skills contribute to what can be referred to as *kind nutritious conversations*. A kind nutritious conversation takes a kindness perspective, discussing the kind acts of ourselves, others, and organizations. These conversations are appropriate for family, friends, and colleagues at work, church, and service clubs. A kind nutritious conversation covers a variety of topics, most importantly the well-being of family, friends, colleagues and our community.

In contrast, unkind news from the media and from conversations about politics, crime, and environmental damage leave many of us feeling discouraged (if not depressed) and sometimes helpless. Malnourished conversations focus largely on 'discouraging' news with little time spent on kind news or on the kind actions we might take to promote our well-being and the well-being of others, including in particular those in need. Malnourished conversations leave us with indigestion, feeling hungry for something positive.

Of course, we need to take in enough unkind local and national/international news to inform us to be responsible citizens, taking action by voting, volunteering, donating to causes, and protesting injustice. Similarly, difficult conversations about the hardships of our friends, colleagues, and even strangers are necessary because they give us information that allows to know when and how to help. In short, a kind nutritious conversation does not eliminate 'bad news' but rather manages it to tilt toward kindness.

You might want to try this activity alone or with family or friends.

For your next couple of conversations, estimate what percent of the conversation was nutritious. Then describe how you intend to make your next conversation more nutritious, by decreasing the focus on bad news that does not inform kind action and increasing the focus on kind news and planning kind acts. Implement your plan and write about what happened.