



KARYN SHANKS MD

Heart, Hope, Healing

The Not-So-Nice Side of Nice

BY KARYN SHANKS MD | OCTOBER 5, 2019



I have a problem with nice.

Do you know what I mean?

Those people who tell you what they think you want to hear? How your hair always looks great (even when you know it doesn't), or how your food is always the most delicious they've ever had (even the peanut butter and jelly sandwich), or what you've written is awesome (when you know it's crap).

I don't need that. In fact, I *hate* that.

See, I think there's a difference between "nice" and kind, compassionate, or empathic. (Or maybe I'm just not very nice!)

The latter I love and crave in my people. We create a connection that's truthful (even the hard stuff) but share it in a positive, supportive, and sensitive way.

Nice is just ... well, nice. Disconnected. Dishonest. Disingenuous. Superficial. Need I go on?

But it's a thing in our culture. A thing we're taught. A strategy we learn to keep peace and stay safe.

But there's a big 'ol downside to nice.

See I think nice is another one of those stories we tell to protect us from our true feelings. Feelings we *need*. Feelings that are our wisdom.

Sure, it's a strategy we use to please others when we just don't have the guts to tell the truth (though we *know* the truth). But it's also how we hide from *ourselves*—from the emotions that make us squirm, allowing only the “positive” ones. We act “nice,” pretending things are good when they're not.

This is not to say we shouldn't cultivate positive emotions, like love and gratitude, or act with kindness, empathy, and compassion toward others. We need all that.

But life and the world aren't all good. We need to know and accept that. We need the wisdom of our true feelings. Nice hides all that.

Nice is not at all the same as kindness, compassion, and empathy. I think nice is dangerous. Nice disguises our authenticity. Nice shuts us down and shuts others down. Nice keeps our relationships, interactions, and experiences superficial by closing the door to the truth we all desperately need. Truth that must be heard and will find its way in, one way or another—like anger, resentment, and jealousy.

We've all been there. We all know this.

Tell me what you think about nice (and don't be nice about it!).

Have a Beautiful day!

Karyn

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Karyn Shanks, MD, is a physician who lives and practices in Iowa City. Her work is inspired by the science of Functional Medicine, body-mind principles, and wisdom gleaned from the transformational journeys of thousands of clients over her twenty-five-year career. Her work honors each individual and the power of their stories, their inner wisdom, and innate healing potential. She believes that the bones of healing are in what we do for ourselves. She is the author of *Liftoff*, a manual of energy recovery and healing through essential self-care practices.

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