

Introduction

When I first started talking to friends and random strangers alike about the fact that I was going to write this book, there was not one person who didn't immediately laugh along WITH me and point out that they can't wait for it, because "saying it like it is, but being kind" is so very needed! Interesting, isn't it that this idea so fundamentally, universally resonates for so many people? Because being on the receiving end of someone either speaking from stress and reactivity, or speaking without sufficient thought, let alone regard for the consequences or potential psychological harm that might result from their words and deeds, has become an experience so familiar to the majority of us? In both personal and professional contexts? Or maybe also because (oops, awkward confession time) ~69% of us now also admit to having been the one who lost their cool ourselves towards others online...and might be admitting, without admitting, that we ourselves might also need more support and skill at times, in how to say it like it is, (assert, influence, lead, relate and resolve our differences) with greater kindness?

In either case, sadly, post pandemic research on the prevalence of verbal abuse, bullying and harassment tend to back up a significant need for greater skill in kind communication and con-

flict resolution. In workplace settings, statistics per country and by industry range from ~20%-90% of individuals having been on the receiving end of such behaviours in the last 1-3 years. Stats on the frequency of online harassment suggest that ~60% of all internet users have experienced abuse online. Hence we've become more technologically connected, and yet more disconnected from the humanity of the other behind the profile picture...and how what we do or say is impacting them, "IRL."

The quality of our communication for too many also seems to have gone down, as statistics on the number of people experiencing mental health, stress and anxiety in both professional and personal settings have gone up over time and post pandemic. The recent worsening global prevalence of emotional, verbal, physical or sexual abuse and neglect in our homes; statistics varying between 10% and 67% of people having experienced them (depending on the country, age group, gender and kind of abuse being examined) also being symptomatic of our ongoing struggle of many to stay connected, resolve our differences effectively and have both parties needs continually met in healthy ways over time.

Globally, trauma is also, statistically, way more common than we might think too; in the magnitude of 70-73% of adults globally having experienced at least 3 instances of traumatic life events. Yet, who taught most of us the mental health first aid aspect of kind communication, needed to support any given one of us through such times? Let alone how to communicate and relate most effectively, and make it "psychologically safe" for others to engage with us, in personal and professional settings, full stop? It's hard to just know how to do something if we've never had a chance yet to learn or practice doing that

thing in communicating and relating, let alone how to do it well? Let alone when we still have a lot of hangups about kindness actually being a weakness, about where the true power in our voices really comes from? And what even is the Goldilocks “just right” amount of honesty anyway? And how do you work out how much is “too little,” or “too much?”

While kindness done for survival related reasons (for example as a coping, pleasing or appeasing strategy, as a symptom of abuse and trauma) can have negative affects for our physical and mental health, research shows that the loving presence and kindness of others is also so critical to our psychological and physical health that an infant can literally die of distress without it. And many people, by mid life to their elderly years, will experience more heart, health and mental health problems without it.

Research on both provision of psychological safety and on the benefits of kindness applied in workplace communication and engagement, also indicating that both are essential to our ability to show up and perform optimally. As well as to the quality of outcomes and results we achieve at work. In addition to being of critical importance to the effectiveness of our leadership and ability to successfully influence change in the world. At this time of great additional distress from pandemics, wars, environmental and financial crises, the quality of how we show up in our personal and professional engagements has never been so important.

Kind communication (and the 6 foundational pillars of it that we will discuss later in this book,) I believe, is a part of the remedy, that we need to be embodying right now. So, what this

book is really all about, is how we create greater psychological safety, by improving the quality of engagement and taking ownership of the true, heart-centred power in our voices. And how we apply it, to improve the quality and longevity of both our relationships and the outcomes we work towards achieving within them.

The trust and psychological safety that develops as a result of showing up in all aspects of our communicating and relating with kindness and skill in heart centred, authentic communication, is a key factor in our ability to show up and shine our light, our gifts, creations and our voice of wisdom out into the world. And in others being able to shine theirs.

Being held lovingly within the psychologically safe container of a healthy interdependent relationship, or even better, a tribe full of them, helps us feel safe to truly be US in our entirety; despite what was, in deep appreciation of what is, and with a sense of encouragement and excitement around what the future holds for us and others. And in turn, holding that psychologically safe container for others, helps them to do the same.

Kind candidness, (as opposed to just saying anything and everything like it is), is also a container in which we both listen optimally ourselves AND make it safe for others to not just listen. But to truly hear, to deeply consider and to ultimately incorporate what we have to say into their way of seeing and being in the world. Hence saying it like it is with kindness, can be a driving force in catalysing meaningful and lasting change out there in the world. To real, purposeful and meaningful influence. And it's also the means by which we can achieve so many different kinds of positive outcomes, both qualitative and

quantifiable, so much faster together than we might have dared to imagine that we ever could alone.

Our ability to say it like it is with kindness, in other words loving authenticity, is also the key to finding the genuine compatibility and connectivity within any given relationship, personal or professional, that both forms the basis of and fuels the deepening of that connection over time. And is therefore, also key to the longevity of such relationships, personal and professional, that we want to nurture to their fullest potential over time.

Showing up in our communicating and relating, in ways that promote greater psychological safety not only leads to greater relational longevity. But also creates a shared space in which we can get much better outcomes in all aspects of life, and achieve all kinds of goals faster.

More than that, when we understand the fundamentals of how to communicate and relate in ways that create psychological safety, we become not just better equipped to heal and repair relational injuries and psychological harm after they've occurred. But even better, we start to get proactively on the front foot of showing up and communicating from minute 1, in a way that ensures that there is so much less risk of them ever even occurring in the first place. Is prevention not more appealing than endlessly applying bandaids to our relational injuries, after the fact?

You might be wondering though at this point who I am to be commenting on the subjects of effective communication and psychological safety? And how I know that the 6 foundational pillars of kind communication detailed next in this book, and

evidence based communication, relationship building and conflict prevention tips and techniques contained within each chapter you're about to read, have proven results?

I am a trauma-informed, qualified Counsellor and Internationally accredited Wellness Leadership Coach, who also holds a Bachelor of Science (Animal/Biological Science), with a background in studying Performing Arts and Transpersonal Art Therapy. Who worked often in Business Support, Leadership Support and Management capacities with multiple Allied Health and Mental Health services, Community Services NFP's and Registered Training Organisations while studying. Before later building my own Private Practice. And then finally becoming a Mentor and Trainer of other similarly qualified Health and Wellness Professionals. And being involved in bringing together a global support network of over 20 000 of them, with 2 of my past Wellness Marketing Colleagues and Mentors.

I've received the benefit of the knowledge also that came with supporting all of those and some of the Senior Emergency Services Operational and Education Management Leaders in supporting people in time of crisis. Before later having worked with and for some of the countries Leading Institutions and Experts in Leadership and Communication. On the alternative health side, I've also studied or been Mentored in numerous Psychosomatic Bodywork, Neo Shamanic, Quantum Energetic and Mechanics based healing practices for clearing patterns and trauma, and reactivating our highest potential. And have spent much of the last 16 years researching how to realise our full potential in life purpose, in personal and professional self expression, and in interpersonal communication and relationship with others. Along with how to liberate ourselves from the

negative impacts of the traumas of life that can be getting in the way of our capacity to realise that very potential in any and all of them. Especially, as closest to my heart, in how we communicate and relate.

My interest in doing so, was admittedly born out of personal and professional necessity, rather than just academic curiosity. I've been blessed to have some incredible Teachers, Mentors, friends, support people and opportunities around me over time, despite having been through A LOT from a young age. But I didn't get far into my Theatrical professional career, or full time occupational voice usage in Customer Service, Sales, Facilitation and Public Speaking capacities either, before vocal fatigue (later diagnosed as Muscle Tension Dysphonia) and high anxiety became a barrier to both sustained success and longevity. Or far at all into the realm of fame, film and television, or interacting with drunk and sober fan friends and romantic partners, before my ability to assert my needs, boundaries and influence others (or lack thereof) resulted in a major back injury, sexual assault, rape, and getting physically assaulted by drunk partners in my sleep.

As a bit of backstory, I grew up in an Australian coastal, remote country town, full time working single parent family after losing my Mum to leukaemia and being raised by my Dad. My little bro and i were provided for, I had a stable room over my head, we were blessed with amazing neighbours, babysitters and extended family. But many things happened between the age of 6 and 14 that it felt like one of my darkest times. Complete with numerous literal floods for added dramatic effect. Until, for some reason I even to this day I don't fully understand, 2 human Angels in the form of my High School Drama

Teacher and the Art Teacher he was married to showed up and decided to make my younger Brother and my Business, their business. And through Drama Classes, Lead Roles, 1st AD'ing and Mentoring younger students in School Productions, I found expression, healing, much joy and a definite sense of purpose. But I was often as the eldest, at home, being a parentified teenage fill in-Matriarch, and like an episode of the Aussie Drama Puberty Blues, fending off the odd sexual predator, rather than just being a kid. So admittedly, after winning the final year Performing Arts award, successfully getting into Contemporary Arts Drama, and guiltily leaving home at 18 feeling somehow actually like a middle aged Empty Nester, now free to do me, I had a lot of sh#\$ to sort out in the realm of human relationships. Blessed and cursed with all this love I had to give and a huge desire to make a meaningful impact, but fighting against just as bigger fears of actually being seen, walls, and doubts about whether any of it was really wanted or needed. While I've often labeled it by other names, so much of the inner work of my 20's and 30's, and the outer work of helping others, was really about figuring out both how to create a sense of psychological safety within. As well as about how to create greater psychological safety in connection with others out there. So that we all became free to be, and support each other to be, who we were meant to be. It was also about coming to understand where our true power in self expression, really comes from.

I've also long been both blessed and cursed with the gift of heightened intuitive awareness, as well as with the blessing and the curse of an equally well developed capacity to say what I really mean. The blessing being the refreshingness of honesty. The curse being the impact and consequence of honesty. As a

female Actress, Signer and Speaker, wanting to empower other female voices, I soon came to the understanding that, in the process of finding the power in your voice, yes there is the nice girl people pleasing bit at one end to work through. But at the other, what is the good in speaking your truth at any cost, if the way in which you do so, leads to so much collateral damage to others feelings and to our relationships, that there's no one left in the room, still willing to hear you by the end of it? And so the real work, while trying to own the true power in my voice, personally or professionally, really became about (and I have to give one of Australia's Leading Speakers and Speaker Trainers I'd formally trained with, Matt Church, credit for the paraphrasing my own wisdom back to me of this, the art of "saying it like it is, with kindness."

As I worked through my own relationship challenges, patterns and types of traumas, (learning the hard way at times what NOT to do through lived experience, and then worked on forgiving myself for what I once didn't know) I also started to realise the potential that I had to help others heal from similar empowerment, self expression, interpersonal communication and relationship challenges, to be able to realise their full potential in life purpose, love, self expression, interpersonal communication, leadership and occupational voice use too.

Along the way, I've been fortunate to train with the Business Schools of and or work for some of the Worlds Top 10 to 20 Paid Professional Speakers and Leadership Experts, as well as Training Organisations in Leadership and Professional Communication. Through attending or working at their trainings and events, through years of running my own, as well as between 2013 and 2017, having been roped into two of my for-

mer Mentors mission to help “Move the world to Wellness”, by supporting over 20 000 Holistic Wellness Professionals to gain greater skill in marketing and own their voices in their private practice building efforts, I’ve had the benefit of having now several thousand (likely more) Coaching and Mentoring conversations, that have provided a wealth of insight on both what gets in the way of them being able to show up in their highest potential in personal and professional communication, leadership and occupational voice use. As well as in their efforts to influence the kinds of outcomes they really want, in personal, familial, friendship or intimate relationships, as much as professional ones.

If this book is really about creating greater love and psychological safety in communication, it’s also about understanding what it really takes for ourselves and others to feel safe to show up as all of ourselves, warts and all, in both personal and professional settings. As well as what it really means and takes to find the true heart centred power in our voices, and how to successfully apply it for the greater good, in service to others. To achieve better personal and professional outcomes faster. As well as understanding how to truly achieve positive influence and impact change for the greater good.

On a deeply personal level, this methodology has become the measure of how I’ve come to aspire to show up in the world. But it’s also become the guidebook that I’ve been wishing for over a decade that I could just hand people in both professional, familial and romantic settings and go “this, this is how I’d love to love and be loved.” And how we need to relate at work if we’re truly serious about supporting each other to reach our highest potential and thrive through the best and the worst of

times, over the long haul. If you've ever thought something similar about someone, now this could potentially be a resource that you might hand to them too?

Each chapter is a “how to guide” on how to implement each of the 6 foundational pillars of kind communication, paired with practical exercises you can use to take the processes forward and apply them in your personal and professional world. So that you'll have the best chance of taking what is on offer in this book, and turning into into real-world improvements and lasting results, for yourself, your loved ones and those you have the privilege of working with too.

If you follow the methodology I unpack within them, it's absolutely possible that you will:

- Come to develop a quiet confidence in and understanding of where the true, heart-centred power in your voice really comes from and how to apply it for the greater good of all
- Strengthen and improve the quality of your relationships of ALL kinds, personal and professional
- Reduce the risk of relational injuries ever occurring in the first place
- Achieve better outcomes, as per your shared visions and goals in both personal and professional settings, with kindness, faster and with greater speed, efficiency, ease and grace AND
- Make a greater positive impact and create lasting positive change through your work.

But that being said, it also remains completely within your wheel house at all times, what of this you do and don't take on,

what you do and don't choose to do with it and how much committed, consistent work you put in to create those better outcomes. You doing you and leading by example is half of the success equation. The collaborative, committed team effort of the other party/ies involved is the yin to your yang, or yang to your yin, so to speak. When we stop viewing kindness as some form of character flaw, and realise the true power that exists in allowing ourselves and our voices to be channels for the expression of greater love in the world, we can do and achieve truly remarkable things.

If you have any questions along the way about how to best implement anything in this book in your particular circumstance, you are also most welcome to reach out to me (Nat, and or my team.) And we'll do our best to help, or put you in touch with someone who can.

It's lovely to see (or meet) you. Thank you for reading and I'll see you on the other side for Chapter 1.