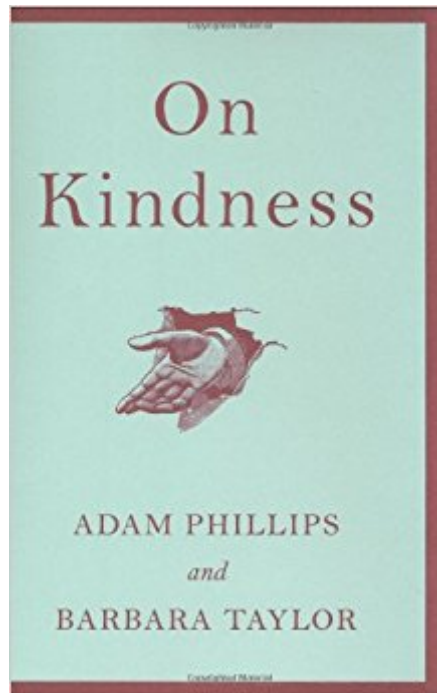




The book was found

On Kindness



Synopsis

Kindness is the foundation of the world's great religions and most-enduring philosophies. Why, then, does being kind feel so dangerous? If we crave kindness with such intensity, why is it a pleasure we often deny ourselves? And why—despite our longing—are we often suspicious when we are on the receiving end of it? In this brilliant book, the eminent psychoanalyst Adam Phillips and the historian Barbara Taylor examine the pleasures and perils of kindness. Modern people have been taught to perceive ourselves as fundamentally antagonistic to one another, our motives self-seeking. Drawing on intellectual history, literature, psychoanalysis, and contemporary social theory, this book explains how and why we have chosen loneliness over connection. *On Kindness* argues that a life lived in instinctive, sympathetic identification with others is the one we should allow ourselves to live. Bursting with often shocking insight, this brief and essential book will return to its readers what Marcus Aurelius declared was mankind's greatest delight: the intense satisfactions of generosity and compassion.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It's not easy being human. We're complex creatures, possessed of intellect, driven by instinct, bedeviled by emotions. We're necessarily interdependent in a competitive culture that extols self-sufficiency. Extending kindness makes us genuinely happy; being seen extending kindness makes us look self-serving or, worse, weak. We are suspicious of kind acts and the people who commit them. If you were to seek Freud's counsel on all this, he'd say we hate that we love so we

idolize what we desire to help rationalize our needs. What a mess. If only Adam Phillips and Barbara Taylor, authors of a small, elegant book, "On Kindness," could do more than delineate the trouble and track its origins. If only they could point the way to a kinder life for all of us. If only somebody universally respected -- Oprah? -- made this book required reading now, before, say, the next episode of "Survivor." If only capitalism and Goldman Sachs and third-party health insurance administrators and the classroom bully could take a lesson from Marcus Aurelius, Rousseau or even Dickens, as set out so clearly in "On Kindness." If only... But Phillips and Taylor, while clearly proponents of a kind society, do not lobby for change as much as they detail the decline of kind behavior in societies made up of people who find one of the sincerest forms pleasure scorned. They write, "An image of the self has been created that is utterly lacking in natural generosity." This image, they say, shows us "deeply and fundamentally antagonistic to each other." This image we have of ourselves shows our motives to be "utterly self-seeking" and our sympathies suspicious "forms of self-protection."

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