

As a supermarket worker, this is the kindness I'm witnessing

Marnie Vinall April 16, 2020 — 3.00pm

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Supermarkets are odd places right now; they are both spaces of normalcy and symbols of the turmoil of the times. They are environments where you can still buy your weekly guilty pleasures, but you do so while giving side glances to make sure no one gets too close.

And yet, in this strange new world, I'm noticing something other than just fear and unease, and that's a certain breed of kindness towards each other.



Kindness, no matter how small or simple, is softening the sorrow of it all.*iStock*

I am one of the lucky few who managed to score a job at Woolworths after losing a large amount of work to the COVID-19 crisis. Having previously worked for the company, I was plucked from a stack of online resumes and placed at the checkout.

On one of my first shifts, I scanned a young woman's smoked trout mousse dip and commented that I didn't know you could get such a product. She told me that it was for her housemate and she searched endlessly to find it.

She just really needed to walk through the doors of her home with something special to make him smile.

While I scan items and help at the service desk, I'm seeing bouts of thoughtfulness throughout the day from members of the public towards those they are close to, to their communities, and most heart-warming of all, to strangers.

While scanning another woman's shopping, I noticed an assortment of 'Happy Easter' cards. "Those are cute," I said to her. She then told me they were for her neighbours in her apartment building. "I'm spending more money than I probably should be but thought it'd be a nice thing to do – to just put them under everyone's doors".



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'Give a bit': how kindness conquers during a pandemic

A toilet paper fairy, an envelope full of cash and free meals are just some of the random acts of kindness coming to light during the COVID-19 pandemic.

And sometimes the kindness extends between people who don't know each other from a bar of soap.

With customers currently having to pack their own bags, checkout lines are moving a lot slower. Of course, you get the odd person who's outwardly annoyed. But mostly, people are understanding. And even more than that, they are happy to let those more at risk or vulnerable go ahead of them.

Recently, while working in the express lane, an elderly man was taking a long time to pack his groceries. It was painful to watch without being able to help. He was holding up an increasingly growing queue, something that would usually grind at people, but the person next in line just kept smiling at me. Then, when it was finally his turn, he went to step forward but noticed another elderly man walking up with a full basket on his arm. Without skipping a beat, he stepped back and ushered the other man to my register, choosing to wait some extra time to help someone more vulnerable get home faster.

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The time that we're living in is a distressing one for all of us. But kindness, no matter how small or simple, is softening the sorrow of it all.

In the age of the coronavirus, each kind gesture is a commitment to making it through together.

Right now, being a supermarket employee, it may not all be peachy. But seeing community in action each day, I won't be giving up on humanity just yet.

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