

Niceties tokens – a little bit more info

Travelling on public transport in London, the busy city that consists of such little space that you can end up with your head in someone's armpit on the tube, but you would never give that same person any eye contact. Why would we want to talk to strangers? We wouldn't want to strike up chitchat with someone we don't know – but that isn't what niceties-tokens is about – nor is it about rewarding niceness.

It's much more basic than that. It's about engaging and acknowledging people.

Why? Because London is such a wonderful place but we are renowned for being rude; niceties-tokens is part social experiment, part a culture change catalyst. The social experiment is hoping to highlight that we are not in fact 'rude,' just low in confidence about talking and engaging with people we don't know.

And culture change catalyst is trying to achieve a confidence boost in our city's esteem.

Why do we feel any nervousness or feel discomfort when speaking to people we don't know?

And isn't this the real reason behind bystander apathy - when no one gives up their seat to the person on crutches, or no one helps when someone feels faint? Is it because we are horrid, lazy, selfish people or is it something else?

If we all felt confident about interacting with others, knowing that they would appreciate it and that they would do the same for us, bystander apathy would not exist.

The theory behind niceties-tokens is that nice breeds nice and nasty breeds nasty.

A woman gets on the bus and has a go at the bus driver because the bus is late. This puts the bus driver in a bad mood because someone has had a go at him. The next stop comes and he takes a few passengers and shuts the doors, looks in the mirror and sees a man running for the bus waving at him. Does he stop the bus and open the doors or does he drive off? And had that woman not had a go at him would he still do the same thing?

We are just trying to build an awareness of the fact that we can all afford to be a bit nicer to each other, and if we do then the knock on effect will be a nicer friendlier London.