



# FIONA HOBAN

[www.fionahoban.ie](http://www.fionahoban.ie)

## Kindness is a powerful force

### THAT FEEL GOOD FACTOR

It was wonderful to be a part of the Women and Agriculture event in Kilkenny last week. And for those of you who were lucky enough to be present, I have no doubt that you're still buoyed up by that feel good factor! I spoke a little bit about how we can all generate that feel good factor in our everyday lives so this piece is for those of you who would like a reminder or who couldn't attend last week.

### THE SCIENCE OF KINDNESS

We are often encouraged to do something nice for ourselves. And let's face it these little "pick me ups" often involves spending money! The irony is that one of the most effective "pick me ups" is when we do something for someone other than ourselves.

This is not some wishy-washy notion – scientific research proves it. For example, when participants in a study did five new acts of kindness on one day per week over a six-week period (even if each act was small) they experienced an increase in well-being, compared to control groups. In another study, participants who were given €5 or €20 to spend on others or donate to charity experienced greater happiness than people given the same amount to spend on themselves. Interestingly the amount of money did not effect the level of happiness generated.

Research also shows that when we see someone do something kind or thoughtful or we are on the receiving end of kindness it inspires us to be kinder, in turn,



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to others. In this way, kindness spreads from one person to the next, influencing the behaviour of people who never saw the original kind act. Kindness truly is a powerful, energetic and contagious phenomenon.

Being kind and giving to others activates the areas of the brain associated with pleasure, social connection and trust. When we open our hearts and reach out to others in kindness, our brain releases endorphins – the morphine-like chemicals that produce the feelings of exhilaration know as the "runner's high." Acts of kindness, also cause our brain to release "Substance P," a neurotransmitter chemical that blocks physical pain. A steady flow of endorphins and Substance P through our bodies strengthens our immune system, keeps us feeling happy,

joyful, optimistic and energised. This heightens our sense of wellbeing so that we feel calmer, more focused no matter what kind of stressful events might be happening around us.

So the more that we are able to sustain the flow of the "feel-good" chemicals gener-

ated by acts of kindness, the more healthy, connected and creative we are able to be. This allows our caring energy to ripple around us and influence the energy field of others.

Can you imagine the difference it would make if we all made acts of kindness a focus in our life? There's ample opportunity presented to us every day and in these difficult economic times, we could all benefit from a natural boost that doesn't cost a penny! **CL**



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### FAIR DEAL CHANGES

Patients/families may have to pay upfront for nursing home care while waiting for application to be approved. On 1 October, a significant amendment to the Nursing Home Support Scheme (Fair Deal) was introduced by the HSE after discussions with Minister James Reilly.

So, what does it mean? Well, State support will now only be paid in respect of the date the application is approved or the date of admission to the nursing home, whichever is the later. Previously, the payment was from the date of application or the date of admission to the nursing home, whichever was the later.

In the past, patients could be admitted to a nursing home once the medical assessment was complete. There was then a delay of six to 12 weeks while the financial assessment was completed. The State's share of the fees, paid by the applicant to the nursing home during this intervening period, was then repaid to the applicant.

Also in the past, some nursing homes agreed to postpone payment in the knowledge that the Government would backdate the payment so families didn't have to come up with money each week for the nursing home. This is no longer the case.

As a result of the amendment, individuals in need of care/families will have to manage as best they can at home until approval is granted or pay the difference between a person's weekly income (eg, pension) and the cost of the nursing home each week until the application is approved (ie, make up the shortfall).

There is also concern that the new amendment will lead to patients staying longer in acute hospitals while awaiting approval for the Fair Deal, thereby putting acute hospital beds and A&E departments under more pressure.

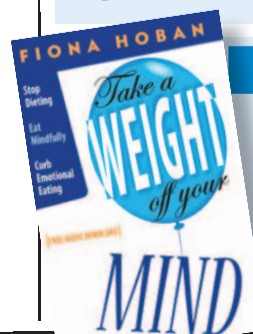
**Note:** The Fair Deal scheme was suspended for three weeks in June 2011 because of funding difficulties. Currently 21,700 people are supported by the Fair Deal scheme. Some 1,250 people are waiting for approval at present. Nursing home care in Ireland per week costs on average between €800 and €1,400 with private nursing homes now being cheaper than public facilities.



### DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

Do you suffer from tinnitus? Tinnitus is a condition where people experience sounds in their ears or head that don't have an external cause. If you suffer from this, there is a talk taking place in the Ashling Hotel on Parkgate St, Dublin 8, on Saturday, 19 November at 11am. Keynote speakers include a clinical scientist, a hearing expert and a clinical psychologist – all authors of the book *Living With Tinnitus And Hyperacusis (Over-sensitivity To Sounds)*.

For more information see [www.deafhear.ie](http://www.deafhear.ie) or telephone the Irish Tinnitus Association on 01-817-5700.



### GET IN TOUCH

Fiona Hoban works as a counsellor in Westport, Co Mayo and also lectures with the National Counselling and Psychotherapy Institute of Ireland (NCPII). She delivers well-being and motivational talks at various conferences and workshops throughout Ireland. For more details go to [www.fionahoban.ie](http://www.fionahoban.ie) If you would like to get Fiona's advice or insight on a particular subject please email [info@fionahoban.ie](mailto:info@fionahoban.ie) or write to Fiona Hoban, Irish Country Living, Irish Farm Centre, Bluebell, Dublin 12.