



Know! To Put Kindness into Action

While there appears to be a designated “day” on the calendar for everything these days, World Kindness Day is one to celebrate and share with the young people in our lives. It takes place annually on November 13th, and promotes putting kindness into action through caring and compassionate acts. In a world where far too many youth face bullying, deal with anxiety and depression, and fight the pressures to succumb to a variety of risk-taking behaviors, why not encourage kindness and compassion? The benefits can be far-reaching and long-lasting.

Richard Davidson and his team of researchers from the Center for Healthy Minds at the University of Wisconsin-Madison say that humans are biologically hardwired for kindness and selflessness. He says that even very young children show a preference toward being cooperative, giving and warm-hearted in their interactions with others. Dr. Davidson also believes that kindness can and should be nurtured in youth, and is absolutely teachable. He says, “It’s kind of like weight training, we found that people can actually build up their compassion ‘muscle’ and respond to others’ suffering with care and a desire to help.”

While the motivation behind acts of kindness should simply be about doing something nice for a fellow human being, with nothing in it for ourselves, it cannot be helped that the giver receives a host of benefits in return. In addition to improving one’s relationships and connections with others, KINDNESS...

Kindness Increases

- **Oxytocin and Serotonin** - powerful hormones that stabilize mood, and provide feelings of well-being.
- **Energy** - some people report a spike in energy after doing good for others.
- **Pleasure** - kindness toward others lights up the brain’s pleasure and reward centers.

- **Happiness** - in a survey that spanned 136 countries, those who reported being charitable givers also reported being the happiest overall.

Kindness Decreases

- **Pain** - produces endorphins, the brain's natural painkillers.
- **Stress** - reduces the stress hormone cortisol in the body.
- **Anxiety and depression** - kindness elevates mood, wards off social avoidance.
- **Blood pressure** – as oxytocin is produced, nitric oxide is released, a chemical that dilates blood vessels and lowers blood pressure.

Ways to Be Kind

Kindness comes in all shapes and sizes, cannot be measured by cost or skill, and can be done at any age. Since this tip focuses on tweens and teens however, here are some ideas geared toward their age group. Of course youth are more likely to become more engaged if they come up with their own ways to put kindness into action. But here are a few ideas to help them get started.



1. Go through your closet and donate some clothing items.
2. Send a positive text to someone.
3. Rake a neighbor's leaves or shovel someone's sidewalk or drive (depending on where you live).
4. Give someone a compliment.
5. Give your mom, dad or other caregiver a random hug.
6. Thank a veteran.
7. Smile more often at others.
8. Say hello to someone new.
9. Offer to babysit for free one evening.
10. Send someone a hand-written thank you note.
11. Hold the door for someone.
12. Do a chore around the house without being asked.
13. Forgive someone.
14. Bake cookies for a neighbor.
15. Ask about someone's day.
16. Call your grandparents.
17. Put a happy face sticky note on someone's locker.
18. Volunteer at any kind of shelter.
19. Smile and say "good morning" to an adult in your school building.
20. Invite someone sitting alone to sit with you at lunch.

These are so many simple ways to be kind. Challenge your child to rattle off or jot down some ideas of their own. Of course parents walking the walk is the greatest way to nurture and teach children the importance of doing good for others.

Also keep in mind that you play an important role if you or your child happen to be on the receiving end of a good deed. Kindness goes full circle when someone accepts that offer of help, smiles back or acknowledges another's kind gesture.

Let World Kindness Day be the kickoff to purposeful acts of kindness among your family that in turn may grow and spread worldwide.

Sources

- Dartmouth.edu. [Random Act of Kindness: Kindness Health Facts.](#)
- Edutopia. [Social and Emotional Learning: Nurturing Kindness in Young Children. Jan. 25, 2018.](#)
- Informed Decisions Blog. [Life, Social, and Emotional Skills: 60 Free Ways to Show Random Acts of Kindness for Teens. Feb. 13, 2017.](#)

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