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Know! To Give and Receive the Gift of Kindness



Tis the season for giving; and among the greatest gifts one can give to another is kindness. It need not cost a thing. One single act of kindness has the potential of inspiring others and creating a rippling effect that keeps on giving. Research shows that we are hard-wired to be kind, some people more than others. But even if your tween/teen is not the most loving or kindest of creatures at this stage in their development, there is hope. Research shows that this character trait—which many believe is the key to happiness and success—can be taught and nurtured as well. That is why we must role model kindness daily and teach our sons and daughters to be the best versions of themselves that they can be.

The bonus of kindness is that the receiver is not the only one to reap the benefits. The giver stands to benefit in a number of ways, including:

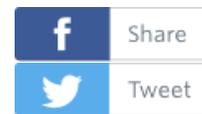
- Increased feelings of happiness and satisfaction.
- Decreased feelings of stress and depression.
- Increased acceptance among peers and a greater sense of belonging.
- Improved self-esteem and self-worth.
- Enhanced immune system and ability to concentrate.
- Greater sense of gratitude.

Some of these positive effects stem from the release of endorphins (feel-good hormones secreted within the brain and nervous system) and the increased production of serotonin (a naturally occurring chemical in the brain that has a calming, mood regulating, and anti-anxiety effect). These chemical releases may occur when a gift of kindness is given or received. But even observing an act of kindness may benefit with a rise in serotonin levels—and therefore



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experience feelings of increased energy, followed by calmness and serenity. Whether the giver, the receiver, or the witness—kindness becomes a win-win-win situation.

Columbus, Ohio 43229
PH: (614) 540-9985
FX: (614) 540-9990

Furthermore, when youth experience greater feelings of self-worth, self-esteem, belonging, connectedness, and an overall increased sense of well-being, they are at reduced risk for engaging in risky behaviors, like drinking, smoking, and using other drugs.

The significance and value of kindness is immeasurable. How can we foster it in our children? Aside from role modeling, we can encourage them to take action and extend kindness to others. Here are some simple but powerful ways to be kind:

- Give someone a genuine compliment.
- Talk to someone new at school.
- Write a note to let someone know they are loved and appreciated.
- Randomly thank a teacher to show your gratitude.
- Deliver a surprise basket of cookies to a neighbor.
- Say thank you—a lot—and really mean it.
- Hold the door for someone.
- Invite someone to join you and your friends at your lunch table.
- Shovel an elderly person's drive – without anything in return.
- Help someone clean up an embarrassing spill.
- Look people in the eyes, smile and say "hello"—often.

When someone expresses genuine care for another, no matter how simple or elaborate, it is a gift of kindness. There is no limit to the number of ways our youth can be kind, in this giving season and beyond. We must teach them through our words and more importantly our actions that they must keep their eyes and hearts open and seize the many opportunities around them to extend kindness.

Sources: [Lisa Currie. Eutopia.org: Why Teaching Kindness in Schools Is Essential to Reduce Bullying. August 10, 2015.](#) [Daniel Goleman. Washington Post. Wired for kindness: Science shows we prefer compassion, and our capacity grows with practice. June 23, 2015.](#) [InspireMore.com: 10 Powerful \(And Easy\) Ways To Be Kind To Others. May 15, 2015.](#) [Marilyn Price-Mitchell Ph.D. The Moment of Youth Acts of Kindness: Key to Happiness for Children & Teens - Four simple steps to increase children's happiness. January 2, 2013.](#) [Underground Health Reporter: The Act of Kindness and it's Positive Health Benefits. 2018.](#)