

Kindness matters



With so much going on in our lives and in the world, let's pause and take a moment to celebrate kindness.

The 13th of November is World Kindness Day, part of the World Kindness Movement's mission to inspire individuals toward greater kindness and connect nations to create a kinder world. Japan initiated this not-for-profit movement in 1997, and today at least 35 member nations participate globally.

The idea is to remember the power of kindness in order to bring people together and create a kinder world. Sounds nice, doesn't it? But does being kind and practising kindness make a difference? The short answer is 'yes'. The longer answer is...

The many benefits of kindness

Being genuinely friendly, considerate and generous, and helping others can improve your own wellbeing. People who perform regular acts of kindness have been shown to be happier, feel more energetic and have higher self-esteem overall. They also tend to live longer, healthier lives. That's because being kind triggers the release of mood-boosting, feel-good hormones like oxytocin, endorphins, serotonin and cortisol. These naturally-released chemicals can also help alleviate pain, lower blood pressure, and reduce stress, anxiety and depression.

Helping others can also help you create and build connections. This gives you a sense of belonging, community and purpose, which helps reduce the risk of depression and anxiety. By definition, kindness is about helping others, not yourself. And it does indeed have an impact. In action, kindness can literally shift perspectives and change lives.



13 November

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**Happy World
Kindness Day**

For a child, kindness and learning to be kind can help them appreciate what they have, and not compare themselves negatively to others. It can also help them focus, do better in school and reduce bullying.

For a person living with a mental health condition or substance use disorder, being treated with kindness can help them feel hopeful, connected and valued. These are keys to successfully coping with, recovering from and managing their condition.

For people in general, being kind can lead to greater life satisfaction, improved physical and mental health, increased empathy and compassion and stronger relationships, among many other benefits. In fact, people who are kind tend to live longer, healthier lives.

For the world, when people are kind to one another, it helps create safer, more positive and inclusive communities.

Choosing to be kind(er)

With so many benefits, it seems that it's in everyone's best interest to promote kindness. Here are some ways to get started in the short term and throughout life.

- **Do something** – One of the best things about being kind is that there are countless ways to do it, so you can choose what feels right for you. Whether it's a random or intentional act, spontaneous or planned, helping a friend or stranger in need (or even one not in need), being kind can take seconds or hours, cost money or be free.
- **Be welcoming** – Help make a positive difference in another person's day-to-day life by helping them feel seen, safe and welcomed. It can be as simple as greeting a passerby, sitting next to a colleague you don't know at a team meeting, or introducing yourself to a new neighbour.

- **Stay curious** – Most people want to be treated with kindness and care, and feel included. Yet, what that means varies from person to person. Do your best to treat others as they prefer to be treated and respect personal boundaries. If you're unsure, ask them. Also do your best to appreciate and make room for people who have different ways of seeing and living in the world.
- **Be supportive** – Hold yourself (and others) accountable for creating a welcoming environment. If you overhear or see something that could threaten another person's sense of safety or acceptance, address it politely, but firmly.
- **Self-reflect** – Think about ways you can nurture compassion within yourself, such as by uncovering and tackling your own unconscious biases, reframing negative thinking patterns and seeking to understand new or different perspectives.
- **Make a commitment** – Challenge yourself to perform a certain number of kind acts within a set timeframe, such as three random acts of kindness per day, volunteering once a week, taking 5 minutes a day for self-reflection, or whatever else suits you. Keep track of your progress and how it makes you feel.
- **Start with you** – Be kind to yourself and take care of your wellbeing. This means giving yourself the same respect and patience you offer to others. Take some 'me' time, eat healthy foods, get enough sleep and stay active. These self-care practices can help you feel mentally, emotionally and physically stronger. When you feel better, it's often easier to be kinder to others.

Sources

Optum, LiveWell, [Promote kindness today – and every day!](#) Last reviewed October 2022.

Optum LiveWell, [The Many Benefits of Choosing to be Kind](#). Last reviewed October 2021.

World Kindness Movement, [We are Kinder](#), Accessed 21 August 2024.



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