

Random Acts of Kindness

What's good for others is also good for you

If you've graduated kindergarten then you likely know the Golden Rule, which teaches you to do unto others as you would have others do unto you. But you may not know that living by that simple rule could actually be good for your health.

Scientists have determined through a variety of studies that people who commit random acts of kindness enjoy physical and mental health benefits. When you help someone, you can experience a rush of euphoria (usually caused by a release of the body's natural painkillers known as endorphins), followed by an extended period of calmness and sense of well-being. This combination of responses helps keep stress in check and can actually reverse the symptoms of mild depression.

In addition, reaching out to do kind things for others is a great way to take the focus off of you, particularly in times of stress or grief. Just ask the many people who have lost loved ones to disease or violence, then dedicated their lives to advocacy and fund raising in order to prevent others — perfect strangers, in most cases — from experiencing a similar loss.

Once you make a commitment to spread kindness, you'll be surprised at how quickly it catches on. Doing something nice for someone else always makes you feel good in your heart and soul — now you know that it does the same for your mind and body as well. Following are some suggestions for getting started.

In your community

- Write a note to a neighbor whose garden you appreciate.
- Pay for the car behind you when you get to the toll booth.
- Give another driver your parking spot.
- Send a card to an old teacher identifying something he or she taught that has stayed with you throughout your life.
- Clean up graffiti.
- Join a service club.
- Tutor a child.

In your workplace

- Praise the skills and/or attitude of a co-worker to someone else in the office.
- Partner with your co-workers and collect food or clothing for a local homeless shelter.
- Make cookies for the parking lot attendant or security guard.

- Express your appreciation to the people who clean the office, deliver the mail and tend the grounds.

In your home

- Tell the most important people in your life that you love them.
- Offer to take over someone's chores for a day or a week.
- Put fresh flowers on the table.
- Make a family member laugh, especially if he or she is under stress.
- Leave the last cookie for someone else.

"No act of kindness, however small, is ever wasted."
— Aesop

"If there is any kindness I can show, or any good thing I can do to any fellow being, let me do it now, and not deter or neglect it, as I shall not pass this way again."
— William Penn

"Carry out an act of kindness with no expectation of reward, safe in the knowledge that one day someone somewhere might do the same for you."
— Princess Diana

"It is one of the most beautiful compensations of this life that no person can sincerely try to help another, without helping himself."
— Ralph Waldo Emerson

Resources

The Random Acts of Kindness Foundation
1-800-660-2811
www.actsofkindness.org

DreamWeavers
www.randomactsofkindness.org

Random Acts of Kindness
www.giftofkindness.com