

*Living on WELL Street* Blog: “**Spread Kindness**”

By Michael White, Worksite Wellness Technical Assistant, We Choose Health

The feel-good benefits of “random acts of kindness” or “paying it forward” (repaying a kind deed done to you to someone else) are not arguable. However, doubts may arise, if it’s suggested that the warm and fuzzy feelings generated from giving or receiving kindness actually provide “health” benefits. A little research on the subject revealed the following:

- Increases levels of the hormone oxytocin in the brain and body, which dilates blood vessels and improves cardiovascular function
- Slows aging by reducing levels of free radicals and inflammation
- Decreases the effect of diseases and disorders
- Strengthens the immune system
- Reverses feelings of depression
- Creates positive connections that improve relationships
- Reduces feelings of hostility, isolation and the stress that comes with it
- Enhances feelings of joyfulness, emotional resilience, and vigor
- Decreases the intensity and awareness of physical pain
- Improves sense of self-worth, attitude and optimism
- Increases job satisfaction
- Builds teamwork
- Improves communication and promotes workplace morale
- Creates a “domino effect” that positively impacts others in the same way

How about that last one – the “domino effect”? It suggests that kindness benefits extend to the giver, the receiver and even those who observe the act of kindness! When we perform a kind act, our body rewards us with an increase in endorphins that a creating a feeling happiness. Recipients of kindness experience the same happiness. And, it doesn’t stop there. Even observers of the kindness realize similar benefits! Dr. Larry Dossey, author of *Meaning and Medicine* (Bantam Books, 1991), explains it this way:

*“Altruism behaves like a miracle drug, and a strange one at that. It has beneficial effects on the person doing the helping - the helper’s high; it benefits the person to whom the help is directed; and it can stimulate healthy responses in persons at a distance who may view it only obliquely.*

Acts of kindness create a ripple effect that can have a far-reaching positive impact on individuals, organizations and the greater community. As kindness increases, individual health and wellbeing improves, organizations function better and we create a more civil society. **Spread Kindness** is a new health promotion activity that invites people to make a conscious effort to extend kindness to others. It can be a “random act” or it can be well planned. Either way, there are real benefits to be realized from doing it, physically and emotionally. Details of the **Spread Kindness** activity can be found in the Health Promotion Activities (link: <http://wechoosehealth365.com/asp/asp/Public/Page.aspx?pid=15548>) on the We Choose Health 365 website.

Be KIND!

Michael