



Activity Title: SPREAD KINDNESS
Activity Type: Individual
Duration: One day, one week or one month
Point Values: - 1 point for each act of kindness
- 3 points maximum per day
-21 points maximum per week
-93 points maximum per month

Description

SPREAD KINDNESS 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. The 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.

How It Works

1. Determine the duration of the activity and establish incentives, if any, for points earned.
2. Share the *Description* and *Resources* with employees and distribute the **Individual Scorecard**.
3. Communicate before and during the activity, using the resources, health information and quotes provided. Emails, social media postings, posters and communication from management can be effective in promoting participation.
4. Participants track their efforts each day on the **Individual Scorecard**.
5. At the end of the activity, employees submit the total number of kindness points achieved to receive wellness points and qualify for a prize drawing.
6. Invite employees to complete the **Activity Survey** and share what they learned in writing. If it is appropriate, and people’s privacy is protected, share positive experiences with all employees.



Wellness Benefits

- Increase 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
- Leads to happiness, pleasure and sense of wellbeing from social bonding and emotional connections
- 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

Measureable Outcomes

- Was morale in the workplace positively affected?
- Did people appear more relaxed and less stressed?
- Did people report that their “Rate Your Day” score improved over the course of the activity?
- Were positive experiences reported on the **Activity Survey**?
- Did people indicate that they would like to do the activity again?

Resources

Australian Kindness Movement (kindness.com.au)

“Kindness and Health”

Link: <http://kindness.com.au/kindness-and-health.html>

BBC New Magazine

“Can kindness movements make a difference?”

Link: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-24548023>

“Making Time: Can we teach kindness?”

Link: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-24363845>

CBS 60 Minutes (cbsnews.com)

Video and Article: “Babies Help Unlock the Origins of Morality”

Link: <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/babies-help-unlock-the-origins-of-morality/>

Dignity Health (hellohumankindness.org)

“Hello humankindness – What can we do to spread humankindness?”

Link: <http://www.randomactsofkindness.org/the-kindness-wall>

Gutman, Ron TED Talk Video on You Tube

“Ron Gutman: The hidden power of smiling”

Link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U9cGdRNMdQQ>



Resources continued

The Huffington Post – The Blog (huffingtonpost.com)

“5 Beneficial Side Effects of Kindness”

Link: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-r-hamilton-phd/kindness-benefits_b_869537.html

New York Times – The Opinion Pages (nytimes.com)

“Nice Guys Finish First”

Link: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/17/opinion/17brooks.html?_r=0

Pay It Forward Day (payitforwardday.com)

Website

Link: <http://payitforwardday.com>

“Inspiring Videos”

Link: <http://payitforwardday.com/inspire-me/inspiringvideos/>

Pay It Forward Movement (pifexperience.org)

Website

Link” <http://www.pifexperience.org>

Positively Positive Website (positivelypositive.com)

“Your Attitude + Your Choices = Your Life”

Link: <http://www.positivelypositive.com>

The Random Acts of Kindness Foundation

“Kindness Ideas”

Link: <http://www.randomactsofkindness.org/kindness-ideas>

“Kindness Videos”

Link: <http://www.randomactsofkindness.org/kindness-videos>

“The Kindness Wall”

Link: <http://www.randomactsofkindness.org/the-kindness-wall>

Video: “The Science of Kindness”

Link: <http://www.randomactsofkindness.org/the-kindness-wall>

SYS-CON Media (sys-con.com)

“Stress Relief Expert Lauren E. Miller Shares Benefits as We Enter the Month of Thanksgiving: An Attitude of Gratitude and Random Acts of Kindness Can Release the Stress in Your Life”

Link: <http://www.sys-con.com/node/1592701>

Scientific American (scientificamerican.com)

“Forget Survival of the Fittest: It Is Kindness That Counts”

Link: <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=kindness-emotions-psychology>

Time Magazine – Health & Family (healthland.time.com)

“The Biology of Kindness: How It Makes Us Happier and Healthier”

Link: <http://healthland.time.com/2013/05/09/why-kindness-can-make-us-happier-healthier/>

University of California – San Diego

“Pay It Forward’ Pays Off”

Link: <http://ucsdnews.ucsd.edu/archive/newsrel/soc/03-08ExperimentalFindings.asp>



Resources continued

University of Wisconsin – Madison
“Brain can be trained in compassion, study shows”
Link: <http://www.news.wisc.edu/21811>

Yes! Magazine (yesmagazine.org)
“10 Things Science Says Will Make You Happy”
Link: <http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/sustainable-happiness/10-things-science-says-will-make-you>

Z6Mag (z6mag.com)
“Is Technology Killing Kindness in Kids?”
Link: <http://z6mag.com/technology/is-technology-killing-kindness-in-kids-1610293.html>

Additional Ideas

As an organization, consider the following group efforts:

- Clean up graffiti and/or pick up trash in a public area
- Hold a book drive and donate to a local library
- Donate items to a local homeless shelter
- Donate time to assisting at a local school
- Host a “Thank You Campaign” that extends appreciation to public servants, like the police and fire departments
- Visit a senior center
- Sponsor and support a youth sports team or organization
- Collect food for a food drive or volunteer at a food bank
- Assist at a homeless center
- Collect donations for a charitable organizations
- Deliver donated Christmas gifts
- Donate blood
- Provide needy families with Christmas gifts
- Adopt a roadway and keep it looking beautiful
- Participate in a Habitat for Humanity home building project
- Celebrate “Pay It Forward Day” on the last Thursday in April
- Celebrate “World Kindness Day” every November 13th

One-Day Challenges

- “Charity Day Challenge” – bring food, clothing or household items to donate to a local charity.
- “Community Day Challenge” – clean up graffiti and trash in the community.
- “Fall Cleanup Day Challenge” – over a weekend, help those in need do yard work and prepare for the winter
- “Pay It Forward Challenge” – whenever possible, randomly do nice things for people. Invite people to anonymously share all the things the acts of kindness that they performed.
- “Thank You Challenge” – write letters of appreciation to the local police and fire departments, and other public service organizations (postal workers, garbage collectors, newspaper delivery persons, doormen), expressing appreciation for the service that they provide.



One-Day Challenges continued

- “Back to School Challenge” – volunteer at a local school in some capacity.
- “Random Act of Kindness Community Challenge” – lead an effort to increase kindness throughout the community by promoting and demonstrating it in a big way.
- “Gratitude Challenge” – express heart-felt gratitude to someone who deserves it.
- “Smile Challenge” – put on a smile and share it as often as possible throughout the day.
- “Reach Out Challenge” – be the change you want to see in the world, reach out to someone who is hurting.
- “Anonymous Kindness Challenge” – do good deeds without being caught!

Quotes

1. *“Together we can change the world, one good deed at a time.”* – Author unknown
2. *“One of the most difficult things to give away is kindness; usually it comes back to you.”* – Author unknown
3. *“Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away”* – Author unknown
4. *“If you have much, give your wealth; if you have little, give your heart.”* – Author unknown
5. *“You may be only one person in this world, but to one person at one time, you are the world.”* – Author unknown
6. *“To be good, and to do good, is all we have to do.”* – John Adams, 2nd President of the United States
7. *“Remember there's no such thing as a small act of kindness. Every act creates a ripple with no logical end.”* – Scott Adams, Creator Of Dilbert Comic Strip (1957-)
8. *“No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.”* – Aesop, ancient Greek story teller,
9. *“Forget injuries, never forget kindnesses.”* – Aesop, ancient Greek story teller
10. *“Your life and mine should be valued not by what we take... but by what we give.”* – Edgar Allen (Founder of Easter Seals)
11. *“Be of service. Whether you make yourself available to a friend or co-worker, or you make time every month to do volunteer work, there is nothing that harvests more of a feeling of empowerment than being of service to someone in need.”* – Gillian Anderson, American actress
12. *“What is the essence of life? To serve others and to do good.”* – Aristotle, ancient Greek philosopher (384-322 BC)
13. *“Educating the mind without educating the heart, is no education at all.”* – Aristotle, ancient Greek philosopher (384-322 BC)
14. *“A tree is known by its fruit; a man by his deeds. A good deed is never lost; he who sows courtesy reaps friendship, and he who plants kindness gathers love.”* – Saint Basil, Bishop of Cesarea (329-379)
15. *“Your greatness is measured by your kindness; your education and intellect by your modesty; your ignorance is betrayed by your suspicions and prejudices, and your real caliber is measured by the*



Quotes continued

- consideration and tolerance you have for others.*” – William J.H. Boetcker, religious leader and influential public speaker (1873-1962)
16. *“There is overwhelming evidence that the higher the level of self-esteem, the more likely one will be to treat others with respect, kindness, and generosity.”* – Nathaniel Branden, Canadian psychotherapist and writer (1930-)
 17. *“I nod to a passing stranger, and the stranger nods back, and two human beings go off, feeling a little less anonymous.”* – Robert Brault, American operatic tenor (1963-)
 18. *“We have to restore power to the family, to the neighborhood, and the community with a non-market principle, a principle of equality, of charity, of let's-take-care-of-one-another. That's the creative challenge.”* – Jerry Brown, Two-time California governor (1938-)
 19. *“To serve is beautiful, but only if it is done with joy and a whole heart and a free mind.”* – Pearl S. Buck, American novelist (1892-1973)
 20. *“Have you had a kindness shown? Pass it on; 'Twas not given for thee alone, Pass it on; Let it travel down the years, Let it wipe another's tears, 'Til in Heaven the deed appears - Pass it on.”* – Henry Burton, clergyman and writer (1840-1930)
 21. *“Our lives are to be used and thus to be lived as fully as possible, and truly it seems that we are never so alive as when we concern ourselves with other people.”* – Harry Chapin, American singer-songwriter (1942-1981)
 22. *“We think too much and feel too little. More than machinery, we need humanity. More than cleverness, we need kindness and gentleness.”* – Charlie Chaplin, comedic actor, filmmaker and writer (1889-1977)
 23. *“You make a living by what you get, but you make a life by what you give.”* – Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1940-45 and 1951-55 (1874-1965)
 24. *“I believe that no characteristic is so distinctively human as the sense of indebtedness we feel, not necessarily for a favor received, but even for the slightest evidence of kindness; and there is nothing so boorish, savage, inhuman as to appear to be overwhelmed by a favor, let alone unworthy of it.”* – Marcus Tullius Cicero, Roman orator (106-43 BC)
 25. *“He who wishes to secure the good of others has already secured his own.”* – Confucius, Chinese teacher and philosopher (551-479 BC)
 26. *“We are all like one-winged angels. It is only when we help each other that we can fly.”* – Luciano de Crescenzo, Italian writer and actor (1928-)
 27. *“I believe that individuals can make a difference in society. Since periods of change such as the present one come so rarely in human history, it is up to each of us to make the best use of our time to help create a happier world.”* – – The 14th Dalai Lama, Head Monk Of The Gelugpa Lineage Of Tibetan Buddhism, (1935-)
 28. *“The true essence of humankind is kindness. There are other qualities which come from education or knowledge, but it is essential, if one wishes to be a genuine human being and impart satisfying meaning to one's existence, to have a good heart.”* – The 14th Dalai Lama, Head Monk Of The Gelugpa Lineage Of Tibetan Buddhism, (1935-)



Quotes continued

29. *"It is our collective and individual responsibility to protect and nurture the global family, to support its weaker members and to preserve and tend to the environment in which we all live."* — The 14th Dalai Lama, Head Monk Of The Gelugpa Lineage Of Tibetan Buddhism, (1935-)
30. *"When we feel love and kindness toward others, it not only makes others feel loved and cared for, but it helps us also to develop inner happiness and peace."* – The 14th Dalai Lama, Head Monk Of The Gelugpa Lineage Of Tibetan Buddhism, (1935-)
31. *"A little kindness from person to person is better than a vast love for all humankind."* – Richard Dehmel, poet and playwright (1863-1920)
32. *"If I can stop one heart from breaking, I shall not live in vain. If I can ease one life the aching, or cool one pain, or help one fainting robin unto his nest again, I shall not live in vain."* – Emily Dickinson, American poet (1830)
33. *"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."* – Dr. Larry Dossey, author of *Meaning and Medicine* (Bantam Books, 1991)
34. *"The greatest poverty that can afflict the human spirit is the loss of a generous heart. You will know that success has slipped away when your passion for helping others grows cold."* – Bill Lane Doulos
35. *"Keep on sowing your seed, for you never know which will grow -- perhaps it all will."* – The Bible, Ecclesiastes 11:6
36. *"Only a life lived for others is worth living."* – Albert Einstein, German-born physicist who developed the general theory of relativity (1879-1955)
37. *"There are two way to live your life. One as though nothing is a miracle, the other as though everything is a miracle."* – Albert Einstein, German-born physicist who developed the general theory of relativity (1879-1955)
38. *"It is one of the most beautiful compensations of this life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself."* – Ralph Waldo Emerson, American essayist, lecturer and poet (1803-1882)
39. *"To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty; to leave the world a bit better whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; to know that even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded."* – Ralph Waldo Emerson, American essayist, lecturer and poet (1803-1882)
40. *"It is in giving oneself that one receives."* – Saint Francis of Assisi, Italian Catholic preacher and founder of religious orders for men and women
41. *"Remember that when you leave this earth, you can take with you nothing that you have received - only what you have given: a full heart, enriched by honest service, love, sacrifice and courage."* – Saint Francis of Assisi, Italian Catholic preacher and founder of religious orders for men and women
42. *"How lovely to think that no one need wait a moment. We can start now, start slowly, changing the world. How lovely that everyone, great and small, can make a contribution toward introducing justice straightaway. And you can always, always give something, even if it is only kindness!"* – Anne Frank, victim of the Holocaust kept a diary of her experiences that later became *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1929-1945)



Quotes continued

43. *"Those who make compassion an essential part of their lives find the joy of life. Kindness deepens the spirit and produces rewards that cannot be completely explained in words. It is an experience more powerful than words. To become acquainted with kindness one must be prepared to learn new things and feel new feelings. Kindness is more than a philosophy of the mind. It is a philosophy of the spirit."* – Robert J. Furey, author and psychotherapist
44. *"I shall pass through this world but once. Any good therefore that I can do or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again."* – Mahatma Gandhi, Indian political and spiritual leader (1869-1948)
45. *"The best way to find yourself, is to lose yourself in the service of others."* – Mahatma Gandhi, Indian political and spiritual leader (1869-1948)
46. *"Be the change you want to see in the world."* – Mahatma Gandhi, Indian political and spiritual leader (1869-1948)
47. *"Consciously or unconsciously, every one of us does render some service or other. If we cultivate the habit of doing this service deliberately, our desire for service will steadily grow stronger, and will make, not only our own happiness, but that of the world at large."* – Mahatma Gandhi, Indian political and spiritual leader (1869-1948)
48. *"The highest of distinctions is service to others."* – King George IV, United Kingdom king (1762-1830)
49. *"Tenderness and kindness are not signs of weakness and despair, but manifestations of strength and resolution."* – Kahlil Gibran, Lebanese-American artist, poet and writer (1883-1931)
50. *"If someone listens, or stretches out a hand, or whispers a kind word of encouragement, or attempts to understand a lonely person, extraordinary things begin to happen."* – Loretta Girzaitis (1920-)
51. *"He who does nothing for others does nothing for himself."* – Goethe, German writer and politician (1749-1832)
52. *"I have never been especially impressed by the heroics of people convinced that they are about to change the world. I am more awed by ... those who ... struggle to make one small difference after another."* – Ellen Goodman, American journalist (1941-)
53. *"One of the things I keep learning is that the secret of being happy is doing things for other people."* – Dick Gregory, African-American comedian and social activist (1932-)
54. *"I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something, and because I cannot do everything I will not refuse to do something that I can do."* – Edmund Everett Hale, American author and Unitarian minister (1822-1909)
55. *"Wherever there is a human in need, there is an opportunity for kindness and to make a difference."* – Kevin Heath, CEO of More4kids
56. *"No act of kindness is too small. The gift of kindness may start as a small ripple that over time can turn into a tidal wave affecting the lives of many."* – Kevin Heath CEO of More4kids
57. *"The best antidote I know for worry is work. The best cure for weariness is the challenge of helping someone who is even more tired. One of the great ironies of life is this: He or she who serves almost always benefits more than he or she who is served."* – Gordon B. Hinckley, author and former President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (1910-2008)
58. *"Help your sister's boat across the water, and yours too will reach the other side." Kindness can become its own motive. We are made kind by being kind."* – Eric Hoffer, American moral and social



Quotes continued

philosopher and author (1902-1983)

59. *"Kindness can become its own motive. We are made kind by being kind."* – Eric Hoffer, American Moral And Social Philosopher and author (1902-1983)
60. *"If you haven't any charity in your heart, you have the worst kind of heart trouble."* – Bob Hope, American comedian and actor (1903-2003)
61. *"Three things in human life are important: the first is to be kind; the second is to be kind; and the third is to be kind."* – Henry James, American-born British author (1843-1916)
62. *"The only time you should look down at someone, is when you are helping them up."* – Jesse Jackson, African-American civil rights leader
63. *"We cannot tell the precise moment when friendship formed. As in filling a vessel drop by drop, there is at last a drop which makes it run over; so in a series of kindness there is at last one which makes the heart run over."* – Dr. Samuel Johnson, poet, essayist and lexicographer (1709-1784)
64. *"Wisdom is knowing what to do next; virtue is doing it."* – David Star Jordan, educator, peace activist and university president (1851-1931)
65. *"Unexpected kindness is the most powerful, least costly, and most underrated agent of human change."* – Bob Kerrey, former Nebraska governor and U.S. Senator (1943-)
66. *"Ask yourself: Have you been kind today? Make kindness your modus operandi and change your world."* – Annie Lennox, Scottish singer songwriter, political activist and philanthropist (1954-)
67. *"He has a right to criticize, who has a heart to help."* – Abraham Lincoln, 16th President of the United States (1809-1865)
68. *"To ease another's heartache is to forget one's own."* – Abraham Lincoln, 16th President of the United States (1809-1865)
69. *"Doing nothing for others is the undoing of ourselves."* – Horace Mann, American education reformer and Massachusetts politician (1796-1859)
70. *"Allow the way to your great work to be guided by your service to others."* – Mollie Marti, psychologist, lawyer and speaker
71. *"Character is what emerges from all the little things you were too busy to do yesterday, but did anyway."* – Mignon McLaughlin, American journalist and author (1913-1983)
72. *"One kernel is felt in a hogshead; one drop of water helps to swell the ocean; a spark of fire helps to give light to the world. None are too small, too feeble, too poor to be of service. Think of this and act."* – Hannah More, Writer, English religious writer and philanthropist (1745-1833)
73. *"If you have not often felt the joy of doing a kind act, you have neglected much, and most of all yourself."* – A. Neilen
74. *"The best way to not feel hopeless is to get up and do something. Don't wait for good things to happen to you. If you go out and make some good things happen, you will fill the world with hope, you will fill yourself with hope."* – Barack Obama, 44th President of the United States (1961-)
75. *"I expect to pass through life but once. If therefore, there be any kindness I can show, or any good thing I can do to any fellow being, let me do it now, and not defer or neglect it, as I shall not pass this way again."* – William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania (1644-1718)



Quotes continued

76. *"How can we expect our children to know and experience the joy of giving unless we teach them that the greater pleasure in life lies in the art of giving rather than receiving."* – James Cash Penney, Founder Of J.C. Penney Corporation (1875-1971)
77. *"I have never met a person whose greatest need was anything other than real, unconditional love. You can find it in a simple act of kindness toward someone who needs help. There is no mistaking love...it is the common fiber of life, the flame that heats our soul, energizes our spirit and supplies passion to our lives."* – Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, Swiss-American psychiatrist and author of *On Death and Dying* (1926-2004)
78. *"What wisdom can you find that is greater than kindness?"* – Jean Jacques Rousseau, Swiss philosopher and writer (1712-1778)
79. *"I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I do know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve."* – Albert Schweitzer, philosopher, physician and Nobel Peace Prize winner (1875-1965)
80. *"The interior joy we feel when we have done a good deed is the nourishment the soul requires."* – Albert Schweitzer, philosopher, physician and Nobel Peace Prize winner (1875-1965)
81. *"To be rich in admiration and free from envy, to rejoice greatly in the good of others, to love with such generosity of heart that your love is still a dear possession in absence or unkindness - these are the gifts which money cannot buy."* – Robert Louis Stevenson, essayist, poet and novelist (1850-1894)
82. *"Kindness is an inner desire that makes us want to do good things even if we do not get anything in return. It is the joy of our life to do them. When we do good things from this inner desire, there is kindness in everything we think, say, want and do."* – Emanuel Swedenborg, philosopher, scientist and theologian (1688-1772)
83. *"If you can't feed a hundred people, then just feed one."* – Mother Teresa, Albanian-born, Indian Roman Catholic religious sister and founder of the Missionaries of Charity (1910-1997)
84. *"In life you can never be too kind or too fair; everyone you meet is carrying a heavy load. When you go through your day expressing kindness and courtesy to all you meet, you leave behind a feeling of warmth and good cheer, and you help alleviate the burdens everyone is struggling with."* – Brian Tracy, motivational speaker and author (1944-)
85. *"I feel that there is nothing more truly artistic than to love people."* – Vincent Van Gogh, artist (1853-1890)
86. *"Kindness is the golden chain by which society is bound together."* – Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe, German writer, artist and politician (1749-1832)
87. *"Three keys to more abundant living: caring about other, daring for others, sharing with others."* – William Arthur Ward, American writer of inspirational maxims (1921-1994)
88. *"A man is called selfish not for pursuing his own good, but for neglecting his neighbor's."* – Richard Whately, English economist and theologian (1787-1863)
89. *"Good words bring good feelings to the heart. Speak with kindness, always."* – Rod Williams, musician
90. *"The best portion of a good man's life. His little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love."* – William Wordsworth, English Romantic poet (1770-1850)



Health Facts

Taskforce For Humanity Coalition

“A Review of Scientific Evidence Supporting the Link Between Altruism and Health”

Link: <http://www.taskforceforhumanity.org/kindness-and-health.html>

By Barbara Velazquez, Ph.D.

A Review of Scientific Evidence Supporting the Link Between Altruism and Health

Scientific research has found convincing evidence supporting findings that not only does being kind help make the world a better place, it also offers significant health benefits, both physically and mentally.

Allan Luks, former executive director of the Institute for the Advancement of Health and executive director of Big Brothers/Big Sisters of New York City, documented the findings of his study on kindness in his book, “The Healing Power of Doing Good: The Health and Spiritual Benefits of Helping Others.”

Luks' study involved a survey of more than 3,000 volunteers of all ages, at 20 organizations throughout the country. After analyzing the results of the survey, in which he asked volunteers about their feelings while performing a kind act, he concluded that a clear cause-and-effect relationship existed between helping and good health. Below are some of Luk's significant findings.

- *Helping contributes to the maintenance of good health, and it can decrease the effect of diseases and disorders serious and minor, psychological and physical.*
- *A rush of euphoria, followed by a longer period of calm, after performing a kind act, often referred to as a “helper's high,” involving physical sensations and the release of endorphins. Once “helper's high” subsides, it is then followed by an even longer period of an increased sense of well-being.*
- *Performing kind acts reverses feelings of depression, provides a sense of social connection. It also reduces feelings of hostility and isolation that can cause such conditions as stress, overeating, and ulcers. For some, the reduction in stress may decrease the constriction within the lungs that leads to asthma attacks.*
- *Helping can enhance feelings of joyfulness, emotional resilience, and vigor.*
- *A decrease in both the intensity and the awareness of physical pain can occur.*
- *A decreased incidence of negative attitudes, such as chronic hostility.*
- *The health benefits and sense of well-being return for hours or even days whenever the helping act is remembered.*
- *An enhanced sense of self-worth, greater happiness, and optimism, as well as a reduction in feelings of helplessness and depression, can be achieved.*
- *The sense of an “affiliative connection” that occurs when helping leads to positive emotions that can strengthen the immune system.*
- *The practice of caring for strangers results in immense immune system and healing benefits.*

In his book, the “Power of Intention”, Dr. Wayne Dyer cites scientific studies, which conclude that kindness both increases levels of the neurotransmitter serotonin and strengthens our immune systems. Serotonin makes us feel light, happy, and at ease and anti-depressants work by increasing the production of this neurotransmitter. Research has shown that a single act of kindness increases the levels of



Quotes continued

serotonin in the recipient of the kindness and in the one being kind. Furthermore, those who witness the act of kindness are affected in the same manner.

Similar findings were obtained in a study conducted by researchers from the University of California, San Diego and Harvard and published in the March 8 early online edition of the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. This study concluded that a single act of kindness can spread between individuals and across time. Cooperative behavior spreads through three degrees of separation i.e. from person a to person b, from person b to person c and from person c to person d. The effects persist over time as well. The study also noted that uncooperative behavior can also spread and persist.

A study conducted by researchers at University of California, Los Angeles, and University of Cambridge and University of Plymouth in the United Kingdom also found that kindness is contagious. The study, hailed as the first of its kind to systematically document this tendency in human nature, concluded that when we see someone help another it gives us a good feeling, which in turn causes us to do something altruistic as well.

Another health related result of kindness is the production of oxytocin. We produce this hormone when we bond with others. Having quality relationships increases its levels. And research has shown that acts of kindness also help us to bond with others. D. Jezova, and M. Ondrejcakova of the Institute of Experimental Endocrinology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava, Slovakia has shown that oxytocin has a powerful effect on free radical and inflammation levels. These are two of the critical culprits in coronary artery disease. Excess inflammation, for instance, leads to a buildup of arterial plaque that can result in a heart attack.

More evidence comes out of a ten-year study of the physical, health and social activities of 2700 men in Tecumseh, Michigan. This study found that those who did regular volunteer work had death rates two and one-half times lower than those who didn't volunteer. Other studies have indicated that helping is associated with boosted immune functioning, fewer colds and headaches, and relief from pain and insomnia. Harvard Medical School researchers who followed Harvard graduates for 40 years identified altruism as one of the major qualities that helped graduates cope with the stress of life. In recent studies University of Massachusetts Medical School investigators found that improved mental health was more closely linked to giving help than to receiving

*Lastly, "Positive Action" is a program that teaches and reinforces the **philosophy** that people feel good about themselves when they engage in positive actions. The program teaches positive actions for the physical, intellectual, social, and emotional areas of the self. A study by Oregon State University researchers found that "Positive Action" when taught to elementary school children, can improve academic test scores as much as 10% on national standardized math and reading tests.*

Other key findings included:

21% improvement on state reading tests

51% improvement on state math tests

70% fewer suspensions

15% less absenteeism

In conclusion, the cumulative results scientific studies strongly suggest that widespread and persistent acts of kindness and altruism can significantly improve both physical and mental health. The impact of an entire town mobilizing to engage in kindness has the potential to have an exponential effect on well being and perceived mental health. It would be exciting to see the results of such an "experiment".



Spread Kindness

Individual Scorecard

Month / Year		First Name														Last Name																
/																																
Day of the Month	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	Total
Kindness Points																																
Rate Your Day																																

Points: Receive "1" point for each act of kindness that you extended to someone. 3 points maximum per day.

At the end of each day, rate your day from 1 (worst) to 5 (best). Do you see a connection between your kindness efforts and your "Rate Your Day" score?

Rate your kindness efforts **before** the activity on a scale from 1 (not very often) to 10 (very often): _____

Rate how effective the "Spread Kindness" activity was in improving morale on a scale from 1 (barely) to 10 (excellent): _____



ACTIVITY SURVEY

Activity Name: _____

Final Day of Activity (MM/DD/YYYY): _____ / _____ / _____

Please rate the statements below by circling the number that best represents your experience.

- 1 – Strongly Disagree
- 2 – Disagree
- 3 – Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4 – Agree
- 5 – Strongly Agree

- | | | | | | | |
|----|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | I enjoyed participating in this activity. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. | The activity increased my happiness. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. | The activity improved my health. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. | The activity improved my energy level. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. | The activity reduced my stress level. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. | I learned something valuable about my health and wellbeing from this activity. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. | I plan to make personal lifestyle changes because of this activity. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. | I would like to do this activity again. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. | The activity improved morale in the workplace. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Please use the back of this page to add comments about your experience.