

# Kindness Matters

## FACT SHEET

2026 Annual Lesson Series



*“Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see” – Mark Twain*

*“Everyone you meet is fighting a battle you know nothing about. Be kind. Always.” – attributed to Robin Williams*

*“In all things, lead with kindness.”*

This fact sheet unpacks the health benefits of kindness, explores intentional and random acts of kindness, and provides ways to incorporate kindness into daily routines and workplaces for a healthier, happier life.

Kindness can be defined as a genuine and sincere way of giving your time and attention with compassion, generosity, and care in order to help and benefit someone else. The act of being kind is sometimes confused with being “nice.” Though kindness and niceness are similar in treating others well, kindness is genuine care, empathy, and a desire to make a positive impact. Niceness can sometimes be more focused on social expectations or politeness without the same level of authenticity or impact as kindness.

### The Science Behind Kindness and Health

Kindness is often seen as a simple virtue, but research shows it’s much more. When you act in kindness, your body and mind benefits significantly. Studies show that kindness can boost the immune system, lower blood pressure, improve mood, and even increase longevity.

### Physical Health Benefits of Kindness

**Lower Blood Pressure:** Performing acts of kindness can help reduce blood pressure by producing and releasing oxytocin, which can promote a feeling of calmness. Oxytocin, commonly referred to as the love, social bonding hormone, can support positive self-esteem, helps you feel more joy and can improve heart health by reducing stress and inflammation. Oxytocin causes the release of a chemical called nitric oxide in blood vessels, which dilates blood vessels. This allows blood to flow more easily and lowers blood pressure (Verona, et al., 2018).

**Boosted Immune Function:** Regular acts of kindness are linked to an increase in certain immune cells, helping the body fight off illness and recover faster from injuries.

**Pain Reduction:** Studies indicate that kindness may release endorphins, which can act as natural painkillers.

### Mental and Social Health Benefits of Kindness

**Reduced Stress and Anxiety:** When you help others, you experience an increase in positive emotions that can counterbalance stress. Altruistic, selfless actions help the brain release serotonin and dopamine, neurotransmitters associated with happiness and calmness.

**Enhanced Mood and Self-Esteem:** Kindness creates a sense of purpose, making you feel more fulfilled and

happier. These feelings can lead to an increase in self-esteem, especially when you see the positive impact of kindness on others. The more kind you are, the more you tend to feel positive emotions (Otake et al., 2006). When you do good deeds for others, your brain's pleasure and reward centers fire up. Being kind can create a rush of positive energy and uplift you (Dossey, 2021).

**Boosts Social Relationships:** People who show kindness are more likely to develop genuine connections with others and to feel content with their social networks (Otake et al., 2006). Being surrounded by a kind and supportive network of friends, family, colleagues, and community groups can protect against feelings of isolation and depression.

**Decreased Depression Symptoms and Depressive Moods:** Kindness can improve your mood and promote purpose and fulfillment (Random Acts of Kindness). Regularly practicing kindness can be a way of coping that can improve outlook and energy levels. Being kind to others can help you feel more self-confident and energetic, which can minimize feelings of depression.

### Daily Practices of Intentional Kindness

Incorporating kindness into daily routines doesn't require grand, costly gestures. Here are simple ideas that make a big difference in the lives of others and in your own health.

**Morning Gratitude and Kind Thoughts:** Start each day by thinking of a few people you are grateful for. Send them a quick text or a note to let them know. This habit sets a positive outlook for the day.

**Practicing Courtesy:** Make it a practice to hold the door open for someone, let a person go ahead of you in line, offer sincere compliments, and acknowledge another's value beyond their appearance or possession. These small acts may seem insignificant, but they create ripples of positivity that uplift everyone involved.

**Listening Attentively:** When you're with others, practice active listening. Give them your full attention, maintain eye contact, and refrain from interrupting. This shows you value their thoughts and helps deepen connections.

**Volunteering Your Time and Talents:** Consider setting aside an hour or two per week to volunteer. Volunteering is an intentional way to help others. Volunteering fosters a sense of community, enhances empathy, and promotes personal satisfaction.

**Practicing Self-Kindness:** Self-compassion is essential to maintaining your well-being. Treat yourself with the same kindness you would show to others. Take breaks, practice mindfulness, or write in a gratitude journal. When you are kind to yourself, it becomes easier to spread kindness to others. Taking time for yourself

before you're depleted is essential to your ability to show kindness to others.

### Building a Kindness Routine

Creating a kindness routine makes it easier to build and sustain habits of kindness. Habits take time to establish. One study found that participants who exercised at least four times per week for approximately 6 weeks established an exercise habit. Similar to a physical activity habit, a consistent and meaningful habit of intentional kindness can be established over time by:

- Doing something you enjoy
- Keeping others in mind
- Doing something for a good cause
- Being authentic

### Random Acts of Kindness

While planned acts of kindness are commendable and important, performing a spontaneous or random act of kindness is truly special. Spontaneity in kindness is the result of compassion without pre-planning or feeling obligated. Spontaneous kindness does not overthink or strategize. It's a positive, authentic response to a moment or a situation. Random acts of kindness are powerful; they aren't expected and they're apt to create a connection between individuals that inspires more acts of kindness (Random Acts of Kindness Foundation: <https://www.randomactsofkindness.org/>).

**Impact of Random Acts on the Giver:** Spontaneous acts of kindness don't just benefit the recipient; they also impact the giver. When engaging in spontaneous kindness, the brain releases oxytocin, creating a sense of happiness and fulfillment. This biochemical response indicates that kindness is ingrained in human biology and is a relational glue that helps society function and maintain civility. Performing random acts of kindness increases happiness in both givers and receivers, but givers typically undervalue their positive impacts on recipients.

**Impact of Random Acts on the Receiver:** For the recipient, a spontaneous act of kindness can lead to hope and a reminder that goodness exists in the world. Random acts of kindness have the potential to inspire a positive chain reaction. The recipient, moved by the unexpected gesture, may be more inclined to "pay it forward," creating a domino effect of goodwill.

**Incorporating Spontaneous Kindness into Daily Life:** Performing random acts of kindness isn't difficult. Start by being observant in your surroundings. Look for opportunities to help, compliment, or support others without overthinking. Practice random acts of kindness, like paying for the coffee of the person behind you or sharing a friendly greeting with neighbors. These unexpected gestures can make someone's day brighter.



## **Planned and Random Acts of Kindness Both Have Impact**

Planned acts of kindness are commendable and contribute to a positive environment, while the spontaneity of an act that is unplanned and motivated by compassion can be a powerful experience for both the giver and the receiver. Try to incorporate both planned and random kindness throughout the week and see if a “kindness habit” develops. Remember, planned as well as spontaneous acts of kindness have the potential to lower risk of cardiovascular disease and improve overall health and well-being.

## **Kindness in the Workplace**

Kindness improves your overall health, family members’ health, others’ well-being, and even health care delivery. High-tech cancer care is best delivered with humanity and high-touch. Simple kindnesses can reduce negative emotions that are sometimes associated with cancer diagnosis and treatment. Kindness may even help to improve the outcomes of patients receiving cancer treatments. Six types of kindness in cancer care, ranging from deep listening, gentle honesty, to guiding words, have been identified as being helpful to patients if they were delivered authentically by healthcare providers (Berry, et al., 2017).

Healthcare providers can also benefit from a kind and civil work environment. The healthcare workplace is a high-stress environment, and that stress can negatively affect cognitive function, decision-making, and problem-solving. As stress increases, it can progress to burnout. One of the consequences of stress is incivility. Promoting kindness in healthcare workplaces benefits stakeholders, patients, and providers. Kindness creates positive and trusted interpersonal connections, which can buffer stress and foster resilience among healthcare providers. Kindness is not just a nice thing to do, it is critically important in the workplace where team members must get along in order to provide quality and important services to patients, clients, and customers (Fryburg, 2023).

## **Workplace Kindness and Civility**

- A 2023 American Bar Association survey of workplace civility and kindness revealed that 85% of attorneys completing the national survey said civility today is worse than it was 10 years ago.
- The Society for Human Resource Management’s 2024 Civility and Respect in the Workplace survey showed that 44% of U.S. workers believed incivility would worsen in 2025. Also, 25% of workers said they would likely leave their jobs because of it (<https://www.shrm.org/topics-tools/topics/civility>).
- However, employees who work in civil environments experience less stress, feel more engaged, and are more productive (Harvey, 2025).

Unfortunately, workplaces that see high rates of turnover, burnout, and absenteeism may have higher incidents of workplace incivility. Civility is behavior that shows respect toward another and causes another to feel valued. Civility contributes to mutual respect, effective communication, and team collaboration. Practicing civil behavior in the workplace establishes a safe and empathetic environment where individuals can contribute their best ideas, knowing they will be heard and valued. Civility encourages open communication, which is essential to fostering innovative ideas.

Kindness and civility are on a continuum of care and respect for all. Kindness and civility are complementary, important, and go beyond politeness. Both civility and kindness are important for fostering positive relationships, building strong teams, and creating a more harmonious and productive workplace.

## **How to be Kinder and More Civil at Work**

Kindness is good for everyone in the workplace as well as for customers who interact with staff. Here are recommendations from the national Random Acts of Kindness Foundation’s guide for kindness in the workplace:

**Reach out:** Be intentional about establishing and sustaining social connections, especially if you work remotely. Practice listening (in person, on Zoom, in both work settings). Showing someone that you genuinely care about what they have to say is an impactful display of kindness. When someone is shown care, they’re more likely to give it to others, further fostering a culture of civility and kindness.

**Acknowledge and Appreciate Others:** Show appreciation for team members’ efforts and contributions. Authentic, thoughtful interactions show that you’re thinking about that person and reflecting on their unique attributes and value. The result is a positive and uplifting environment where kindness thrives. Give authentic praise to others. Realize that by giving verbal praise to others the brain processes verbal affirmations similarly to financial rewards, and praise and gratitude make people feel valued and increase their morale.

**Demonstrate Respect and Courtesy:** Treat others with dignity and politeness in all interactions. Listen to different viewpoints and engage in respectful dialogue, even when disagreeing. Acknowledge and value the contributions and perspectives of all employees.

**Lead by Example:** Leaders should demonstrate respect, fairness and professionalism in all interactions and hold others accountable for their conduct.

Adapted from: *7 Steps to Creating Kindness in the Workplace (Leaders Guide)*; Random Acts of Kindness Foundation [randomactsofkindness.org/work/RAK\\_7\\_steps\\_to\\_create\\_kindness\\_in\\_the\\_workplace.pdf](https://randomactsofkindness.org/work/RAK_7_steps_to_create_kindness_in_the_workplace.pdf)

## The Long-Term Impact of Kindness

Developing a habit of planned and random acts of kindness contributes to long-term health and well-being. People who consistently practice kindness tend to live longer, healthier lives. They have reduced levels of overall stress and stronger social bonds. Acts of kindness spread goodwill in the community and around the world. Kindness is free, simple, and highly effective. What will you do to make kindness a priority in your life?

### Resources for Kindness in Your Life, Family, Workplace and Community:

Random Acts of Kindness Foundation: [randomactsofkindness.org](https://randomactsofkindness.org)

- Offers tips and activities for practicing kindness in families, the workplace and communities

[Kindness.org](https://kindness.org)

- Inspirational content to promote kindness worldwide, including the health benefits of kindness.

Greater Good Science Center (University of California, Berkeley): [greatergood.berkeley.edu](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu)

- Resources on kindness, empathy, and the science of well-being.

Positive Psychology Center (University of Pennsylvania): [positivepsychology.com](https://positivepsychology.com)

- Includes kindness exercises, interventions, and free resources to enhance well-being.

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