



Message to Leaders:

Thank you for leading this lesson, which will help participants gain awareness of the importance of kindness and inspire intentional and random acts of kindness. Though many believe that kindness is an important virtue, especially in children, few adults have explored the behavior of kindness among adults and its many impacts. Be aware that the discussion of kindness might lead some participants to share negative or hurtful experiences that were unkind. Try to keep the discussion positive and constructive even if participants share uncomfortable examples.

Objectives

- Increase knowledge about the health and wellness impacts of kindness.
- Understand that acts of kindness can be intentional or spontaneous; both are important.
- Gain awareness that kindness is a behavior and mindful habit that takes time and practice.
- Understand how kindness and civility affect workplace productivity, stress, and culture.
- Commit to individual, workplace, and community acts of kindness.
- Identify resources for increasing kindness in your life and in the lives of others.

The lesson can be delivered in 30 to 45 minutes, depending on participant discussion. While you can adapt the lesson content to your group and setting, here are recommendations to deliver the content, engage participants, and encourage local acts of kindness:

1. Invite participants to write on index cards acts of kindness they have recently observed in their families, workplaces, organizations, and communities. Participants do not need to put their names on the cards. During the section of the lesson that covers intentional/planned and spontaneous/random acts of kindness, invite participants to share examples of either intentional or random acts of kindness. At the conclusion of the lesson, you may want to collect the index cards to compile them later into lists of examples that can inspire others. Such prompts can lead to community activities (see the list later in this guide), kick-off recognition and celebration of World and National Kindness Day on November 13, or identify pockets of the community where acts of kindness need to be fostered or where they flourish.

2. Open the lesson with a brief introduction (e.g., define kindness and delineate it from “niceness”), then highlight the physical, mental health, and social benefits of kindness.
3. Explain that there are intentional/planned acts of kindness and that there are spontaneous/random acts of kindness. Both are important to positive social interactions in a family, workplace, organization, community. Guide discussions toward the health impacts of kindness. Ask participants to share personal experiences where kindness positively affected their health.
4. Inform participants about the origin of “Random Acts of Kindness,” which is found later in this guide, and then invite participants to share examples of intentional and random acts of kindness from their index cards. Reinforce that the community benefits from both intentional and random acts.
5. Open the discussion of kindness in the workplace by focusing on workplace examples that were shared by participants. Explain that there are studies about the importance of kindness and civility in workplaces such as healthcare settings. Explain that there are some surveys (e.g., ABA, SHRM) that point out some decrease of civility in the workplace. Highlight that kindness and civility, though they’re different behaviors, can both impact communication, innovation, work productivity, worker stress, and burnout.
6. Share strategies and actions that can improve kindness and civility in workplaces as well as places that serve clients and customers. Supplement this discussion with recommendations from the Random Acts of Kindness — 7 Steps to Creating Kindness in the Workplace: Leaders Guide
 - randomactsofkindness.org/work/RAK_7_steps_to_create_kindness_in_the_workplace.pdf
7. Conclude the lesson by asking for ideas and suggestions from participants about increasing kindness. Encourage participants to commit to regular acts of kindness as a way to improve their own health and the health of those around them.
8. Offer examples from the Random Acts of Kindness Foundation, Kindness.org or from Mayo Clinic’s Kickstart Kindness Program. Record the ideas on flipchart or large sticky notes for all to see.
9. Offer the final activity of *Writing a Kindness Letter to Myself*. Distribute stationery or paper and a stamped envelope to participants. Before distribution, have copied on the bottom of the stationery or paper, the name of the local FCS/FCW agent, their contact information, and a paragraph such as:
 - *Thank you for attending our “Kindness Matters” session a few weeks ago. We hope this self-written letter is a reminder that will inspire your next acts of Kindness. Please let your FCS/FCW Extension Agent know how the lesson continues to impact you and those you encounter today, tomorrow and in the future.*
[AGENT NAME, TITLE, CONTACT INFORMATION]
 - Participants are invited to write a brief letter to themselves as a reminder of what they learned during the lesson, and commitments they can make to establish a habit of kindness. Have participants sign, date, and seal the letter in the envelope. Have participants address the envelope to themselves and give it you for mailing in 10-14 days or two weeks.
10. After the lesson, ask participants to complete the evaluation, which is on the back of this lesson. The local Extension Office should manually enter paper evaluation responses into PEARS after the event. Submit the evaluations to your local FCS/FCW Extension agent for program reporting purposes.

Additional Lesson Resources

Origin of the Random Acts of Kindness

In the 1990’s when reporting incidents of community-level violence on the west coast, one journalist noted that people should stop reporting on “random acts of violence” and start “practicing

random acts of kindness and senseless acts of beauty.” That comment sparked interest in and support for acts of kindness across the nation. As a result, there is now deeper understanding that planned and random acts of kindness matter.

Random Acts of Kindness Foundation:
randomactsofkindness.org

- This foundation provides tools, resources, and a curriculum focused on teaching kindness. It offers tips and activities for practicing kindness daily.

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

The Science of Kindness, Random Acts of Kindness Foundation,
randomactsofkindness.org/the-science-of-kindness

A Week’s Worth of Planned Kindness

Encourage participants to start with small and consistent acts. Kindness habits take time to develop and keep. Here’s a sample weekly kindness plan to get you started:

Day	Kindness Activity
Monday	Send a positive message to a friend, colleague, extended and close family member
Tuesday	Pay for someone’s coffee or small treat
Wednesday	Volunteer for a local charity of community service
Thursday	Practice self-care: treat yourself with kindness
Friday	Compliment at least three people
Saturday	Write a thank-you note to someone who helped you
Sunday	Reflect on your week, and practice gratitude

Kindness Journaling

Encourage participants to keep a journal of their acts of kindness and reflect on how these acts make them feel physically and emotionally.

Fostering Community Kindness — Planned and Random Acts

Doing good for and with others may help you to have a more positive outlook about your own

circumstances. Here are ways to foster kindness in your community:

Volunteer. Volunteering opportunities can range from cleaning up the neighborhood, donating blood, planting a community garden, and volunteering for the local food pantry. Your support will help others, and you’ll feel less isolated and more connected having done so.

Check on neighbors and family members, especially those who live alone, have health or mobility issues, or are caring for others. Schedule time to connect remotely or in-person with these individuals regularly to let them know they are not alone.

Support local businesses. When possible, purchase gift cards to local businesses that you can use and uplift those who serve your community’s commerce and quality of life.

Organize a Kindness Recognition event. Challenge family, friends, or coworkers to complete one act of kindness each day for a month. Share and celebrate the experiences in events that inspire others. Organize a volunteer together day like a park clean-up, food pantry drive for goods, a school playground workday. These events help build bonds and promote a culture of kindness within the community.

Provide support to frontline health workers and first responders. Frontline, first responders are working around the clock, so offer to take on tasks that they don’t have time to do. Express gratitude for their role in keeping the community healthy and safe.

Help local fundraising efforts. Look for opportunities to provide much-needed supplies to others; donate, fundraise, support families in need locally, nearby and around the world.

Lead by example. Intentionally do good and be kind. Remember, when you stay calm and “lead with kindness,” others will follow.

Donate kindness books to libraries. Here are two selections:

- *The How of Happiness* by Sonja Lyubomirsky – A practical guide to the science of

happiness, including sections on kindness and positive interactions.

- *The Book of Joy* by Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu – This book explores how kindness, compassion, and joy are interlinked and provide pathways to a meaningful life.
- Scholastic has a list of children's books on kindness: [scholastic.com/teachers/teaching-tools/book-lists/culture/best-selling-popular-books-about-kindness.html](https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/teaching-tools/book-lists/culture/best-selling-popular-books-about-kindness.html)
- **Create Random Acts of Kindness Reminders.** Put up notes or posters in communal spaces reminding people to practice kindness. This could include reminders like “Smile at someone today” or “Hold the door open for someone.” Enlist a 4-H club, church group, or sports team for a Kindness Rocks project: thekindnessrocksproject.com/

View and Discuss this Video with a Group:

Kindness & Civility Matters (2022; 8:12 mins): [youtube.com/watch?v=o6apzHxts-Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o6apzHxts-Y)

Celebrate World Kindness Day will be celebrated around the world on November 13 every year.

First introduced in 1998 by the World Kindness Movement, World Kindness Day offers an opportunity to highlight good deeds in the community and the common thread of kindness. The mission of the World Kindness Movement (WKM) is “to inspire individuals and connect nations to create a kinder world.”

The Random Acts of Kindness Foundation has details: randomactsofkindness.org/world-kindness-day

References and Resources

Abrams, Z (2024) The Case for Kindness: Kindness toward others can boost our own physical and mental health American Psychological Association (APA) [apa.org/news/apa/kindness-mental-health](https://www.apa.org/news/apa/kindness-mental-health)

American Bar Association (2023) ABA survey: Civility is vanishing — and it's the media's fault. Survey of Civic Literacy American Bar Association [americanbar.org/news/abanews/aba-news-archives/2023/04/aba-survey-civic-literacy/](https://www.americanbar.org/news/abanews/aba-news-archives/2023/04/aba-survey-civic-literacy/)

Berry LL, Danaher TS, Chapman RA, Awdish RLA (2017, Nov.) Role of Kindness in Cancer Care. JCO Oncology Practice, An American Society of Clinical Oncology Journal,

13(11):744-750.

Binfet, JT, & Passmore, HA (2019). The who, what, and where of school kindness: Exploring students' perspectives. Canadian Journal of School Psychology, 34(1), 22–37.

Broderick, M. (2019) The heart and science of kindness. Harvard Health Publishing. [health.harvard.edu/blog/the-heart-and-science-of-kindness-2019041816447](https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/the-heart-and-science-of-kindness-2019041816447)

Brownstein, A. (2025 Jan. 8) Kindness linked to better physical health, longevity. Harvard School of Public Health. [hsph.harvard.edu/news/kindness-linked-to-better-physical-health-longevity/](https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/kindness-linked-to-better-physical-health-longevity/)

Carter, C. (2011). Raising happiness: 10 simple steps for more joyful kids and happier parents. Ballantine Books.

Curry, OS; Rowland, LA; Van Lissa, CJ; Zlotowitz, S; McAlaney, J. & Whitehouse, H (2018). Happy to help? A systematic review and meta-analysis of the effects of performing acts of kindness on the well-being of the actor. Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, (76), 320-329

Dossey, L. (2021). Generosity and kindness in our pandemic era. Paradigm, 19.

Fryburg DA. (2023, June 1) Kindness Isn't Just about Being Nice: The Value Proposition of Kindness as Viewed through the Lens of Incivility in the Healthcare Workplace. Behavioral Science 13(6):457

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

Harvey, S. (2025, Jan. 10) Workplace Civility: Building Respectful Work Environments to Drive Performance and Productivity. Forbes Business Council [forbes.com/councils/forbesbusinesscouncil/2025/01/10/workplace-civility-building-respectful-work-environments-to-drive-performance-and-productivity/](https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbesbusinesscouncil/2025/01/10/workplace-civility-building-respectful-work-environments-to-drive-performance-and-productivity/)

Kaushal N, Rhodes RE. Exercise habit formation in new gym members: a longitudinal study. Journal of Behavioral Medicine, 2015 Aug;38(4):652-63.

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

Kumar, A., & Epley, N. (2023). A little good goes an unexpectedly long way: Underestimating the positive impact of kindness on recipients. Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, 152(1), 236–252.

Mayo Clinic - Kickstart Kindness Program: [mayoclinichealthsystem.org/wellness/kindness](https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/wellness/kindness)

Otake, K., Shimai, S., Tanaka-Matsumi, J., Otsui, K., & Fredrickson, B. L. (2006). Happy people become happier through kindness: A counting kindnesses intervention. Journal of Happiness Studies, 7(3), 361-375.

Peng X. (2023, Nov. 9). Advancing Workplace Civility: a systematic review and meta-analysis of definitions, measurements, and associated factors. Frontiers in Psychology, 14:1277188.

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

Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) (2024) The importance of civility in the workplace. Report of the 2024

Civility & Respect in the Workplace survey shrm.org/topics-tools/topics/civility

Verona, E., Murphy, B., & Bresin, K. (2018). Oxytocin-related single-nucleotide polymorphisms, family environment, and psychopathic traits. *Personality Disorders: Theory, Research, and Treatment*, 9(6), 584.

Authors

Lisa Newman, *Family and Community Wellness, Extension Agent, Central Kansas Extension District*
Dr. Elaine Johannes, *Kansas Health Foundation Distinguished Professor in Community and State Extension Specialist, Department of Applied Human Sciences, College of Health and Human Sciences*

Reviewers

Rachael Clews, *Extension Specialist, Family and Consumer Sciences, Southwest Research and Extension Center*
Rebecca McFarland, *Director, Frontier Extension District*
Michelle Lane RN, MSN, CMSRN, CHC, NE-BC; *Senior Director, Community Health and Wellness, North Kansas City Hospital*

K-STATE

Research and Extension

Brand names appearing in this publication are for product identification purposes only. No endorsement is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned.

Publications from Kansas State University are available at:
www.bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

Date shown is that of publication or last revision. Contents of this publication may be freely reproduced for educational purposes. All other rights reserved. In each case, credit Elaine Johannes, Ph.D., and Lisa Newman, *Kindness Matters, Leader's Guide*, Kansas State University, July 2025.

K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director of K-State Research and Extension, Kansas State University, County Extension Councils, Extension Districts.

Kindness Matters

Please take a moment to respond to the questions below.

Date and location of presentation: _____

My county of residence: _____

Gender: Female Male Non-binary Prefer not to answer

Race: American Indian or Alaska Native Asian Black or African American
 Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander White Prefer not to respond

Ethnicity: Hispanic/Latino Non Hispanic/Latino Prefer not to respond

Age: 18-29 years 30-59 years 60-75 years
 76+ years Prefer not to answer

1. Because of this program, I increased my knowledge about the health and wellness impacts of kindness.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

2. Because of this program, I understand that acts of kindness can be intentional or random; both are important.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

3. Because of this program, I gained awareness that kindness is a behavior and mindful habit, which takes time and practice.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

4. Because of this program, I understand how kindness and civility impact workplace productivity, stress, and culture.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

5. Because of this program, I plan to commit to individual, workplace, and/or community acts of kindness.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

6. Because of this program, I can identify resources for increasing Kindness in my life and in the lives of others.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

7. Please list two ways that you plan to incorporated intentional/planned Kindness into your routines.

8. Please list two ways to encourage Acts of Kindness in your community, workplace, and/or organization.

9. Please share any additional comments or suggestions.