



Peer Education Project

Why Kindness Matters



A Guide for Pupils



Mental Health
Foundation



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"[Being kind] is helping others – recognising when they need help and putting yourself out there, even if it's not what you want to do."

Peer Educator
Peer Education Project

What is kindness?

When you think of “being kind”, what comes to mind first?

Maybe you think about giving up your seat on a bus to someone who might need it more, a shop keeper who says hello every time you go in, or maybe you think about someone that you know you can rely on for comfort and support.

There are many definitions of what it means to be kind, but it can be described as choosing to do something that helps others or yourself, which is motivated by genuine warm feelings.

Kindness is about:



accepting ourselves, as well as others, and celebrating our differences.



recognising when we, or others, might need help.



considering other people's feelings and needs alongside our own.



respecting ourselves and treating everyone fairly.



putting ourselves in someone else's shoes.

'Acts of kindness' do not have to take lots of time or cost a lot of money, they can be as small as holding a door open for someone or looking out for a friend when they are having a hard day.

One of the most important things is that we are aware of others and we try to understand what they really need.

Why is kindness good for our mental health?

We may easily see how kindness helps other people, but did you know that kindness can also improve our own mental health and wellbeing as well?



Kindness:

- ☀️ reduces stress;
- ☀️ improves our mood;
- ☀️ increases our confidence in ourselves;
- ☀️ helps us feel more satisfied with our lives;
- ☀️ creates a sense of belonging;
- ☀️ makes us feel less lonely;
- ☀️ keeps things in perspective; and
- ☀️ makes the world a happier place by motivating others to be kind too!



Top tips for showing kindness

There are many ways that we can show kindness to ourselves and others, but if we are struggling to get started, here are some top tips to remember:

Keep others in mind

Part of being kind is considering the feelings and needs of others, so it is important that our kindness is something that others will find helpful, not just what we think might help them.

For example, we might love chocolate cake on our birthday, but it's no good giving chocolate cake to someone else on their birthday if they don't like chocolate cake!



Pace yourself

It's very easy to give away all our energy, especially if we are finding things hard ourselves and want to focus on others.

Remember – kindness starts with you, so leave enough energy for yourself!



Start small

Starting with small acts of kindness means we don't become overwhelmed or give away more than we can. Helping others doesn't have to cost money or take a lot of time.

It could start with calling a friend you haven't spoken to in a while or smiling and saying hello to a neighbour when you pass them on the way to school – little things can go a long way!



Remember that people of all ages need kindness

Being kind to those who are younger or older than us has the same positive effects on our mental health and wellbeing as being kind to our peers.

Try thinking about the feelings of other people in your family, school, or community and find ways to show kindness to them.



Do something you enjoy!

You can share your skills and interests with others as a way of showing kindness. For example, offering to help with technology, sharing cooking recipes or tips, or inviting someone to play football.

Acts of kindness can also be for yourself, so find things that you enjoy!



How we can show kindness...

Kindness can be shown in many different ways and it tends to look different for everyone. Finding what works for us, and for others, is key to making sure our acts of kindness have the greatest effect.

...to ourselves

Being kind to ourselves is sometimes even harder than being kind to others! We can easily be more judgemental of our own behaviour, thoughts, and feelings than we are of others, but over time this can chip away at our confidence and self-esteem.



We cannot pour kindness from an empty pot! So, while it might feel uncomfortable at first, we need to make sure we top our own pots up with self-kindness from time-to-time.

You can do this by...

Spending 30 minutes every day doing something you love.

Listen to a favourite song, read your favourite book, play a sport, spend time outdoors, speak with friends – with a clear mind we are more likely to be patient with ourselves, and others.



"I'm not good enough"

Practicing 'thought-swaps'.

Every time you begin to think a negative thought about yourself, try training your brain to swap the thought with a more balanced one.

For example, instead of thinking 'I'm not good enough', try swapping it to 'I'm doing my best'.

If you get stuck, think about what you would say to a friend and write down the new thought to help remember it for the future.

"I'm doing my best"

Praising yourself.

Every morning, practice finding one thing to compliment or congratulate yourself on – maybe something you are proud of or a quality that you have. Try writing it down to remind yourself of it later on.

Practicing this daily will help kind thoughts about yourself come to mind more freely and often.



Being patient with yourself.

It's easy to put lots of pressure and expectations on ourselves. It is important we are patient and learn to give time and space to our thoughts and feelings.

Think about what helps you to feel calmer and less frustrated, maybe it's listening to some soothing music or taking a break from what you're doing to go outside.



Practicing mindfulness.

It is important to create time in the day to focus on ourselves and reconnect. Mindfulness is one way of making time to pay attention to what is happening in our minds and bodies right now, without judgement.



There are lots of different ways to be mindful, so give yourself time to find something that works for you.

You could try using meditation apps, like [Headspace](#), or taking some time away from social media to draw or write about your day instead.

Being kind to others.

Being kind to others can make us feel good and have positive effects on our own mental health and wellbeing, so this is another way we can be kind to ourselves.



There are some ideas to try on the next page!

How we can show kindness...

...to others

Being kind to others can be done in many different ways.

You could:

- ☀️ share with others how you show kindness to yourself.
- ☀️ call a friend you haven't spoken to in a while.
- ☀️ buy recycled or recyclable products.
- ☀️ pick up some rubbish lying around in the street or playground.
- ☀️ offer your seat on public transport to someone who may need it more than you.
- ☀️ smile and say hello to people you pass every day.
- ☀️ volunteer at a local charity shop – this can get you some work experience too!
- ☀️ donate clothes to a charity or homeless shelter.
- ☀️ be kind in the way you use social media.



How we can show kindness...

...at home

Being kind to others can start at home.

You could try to:

Help a sibling with homework or teach them a new skill.



Find out if your neighbour needs help with their shopping or bringing the bins in.

Ask if you can help with the gardening or housework - try setting challenges to make this more fun!



Set up a random acts of kindness challenge with your family where you perform acts of kindness to as many people as possible (but remember quality over quantity!). You could even take photos and collage these at the end.

Create a gratitude jar by finding an empty jar and encouraging your family to write down things they are grateful for and put them into the jar. At the end of the week, or month, you could read these out together as a family.



How we can show kindness...

...as a school community

School is a great place to start showing kindness to ourselves and others.

You could:

-  invite someone to join your group at lunchtime.
-  help a classmate with their school work.
-  write a thank you note to a classmate, teacher, or another member of school staff.
-  congratulate someone for something they have achieved.
-  teach someone a new skill of yours.

THANK
YOU

Or, you could think about kindness in a bigger way...

Organise a charity event in your school!

You could even base the event around completing acts of kindness or on something others will enjoy, like a tasty cake sale!



FUND
DRIVE
FOR
CHARITY



Get creative!

Make cards or bookmarks with kind images and quotes on them. Hide these in books from the school library (with permission) or outside in your local community for other people to find.

Find out more



Watch our video on [Why Kindness Matters.](#)



Read this [article and watch the video to understand why kindness is a brilliant form of self-care.](#)

Then check out this great resource with [ideas for self-care strategies suggested by other young people.](#)



Download or save the [kindness bingo grid](#) to your phone and check off the kindness tasks as you achieve them – see how many you can do!



[Watch this video to see how one act of kindness a day can change your life.](#)



**Random Acts
of Kindness**

[Watch this video to understand the science behind kindness.](#)

[Or this one that shows how kindness can make the world a happier place.](#)



[Print off and decorate these kindness notes for people in your family or class.](#) You could even hide them around your home or schools and someone will get a nice surprise when they find it!



[Find an act of kindness that works for you from these 101 random acts of kindness!](#)



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