



KINDNESS BUDDY

"Do things for people not because of who they are or what they do in return, but because of who you are."

—Harold Kushner

OVERVIEW

Students get a secret kindness buddy to do a kind act for during the week. At the end of the week, they reveal their buddies and reflect on how it felt to be kind.

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- Anytime during the year, but especially at the beginning of the year to help build a safe and caring classroom climate

TIME REQUIRED

- 15-20 minutes x two days

LEVEL

- Pre-K & Lower Elementary

MATERIALS

- Slips of paper or index cards with the name of one student per card
- Bag or box to hold the slips of paper
- Writing materials
- Large ball of yarn

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Notice how doing acts of kindness for others builds positive feelings in the classroom

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

- [Making Practices Culturally Responsive](#)
- [Adapting Practices for Students with Special Needs](#)
- [Making Classrooms and Schools Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered](#)

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Awareness
- Social Awareness
- Relationship Skills

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

Take a moment to reflect on a time when someone did something kind for you. How did it make you feel?

INSTRUCTIONS

THINKING ABOUT KINDNESS

- Ask the class:
 - *Can you recall a time that someone did something for you that was kind or helpful?*
 - *Can you describe for us how it made you feel?*
- Explain:
 - *This week, everyone in the class is going to have a chance to do something kind for someone else, and to have someone else do something kind for you.*
 - *Each of you will draw the name of another student in the class.*
 - *That student will be your "kindness buddy" for the week.*
 - *At least once during the week, do something kind or helpful for your kindness buddy.*
 - *At the end of the week, you will get to find out who your kindness buddy was.*

CHOOSING A KINDNESS BUDDY

- Place the cards with names of the students in a bag or box. Have students draw a name. If they draw their own name, they can put it back and draw a second time. If there is an odd number of students in the class, add your own name and draw a child's name.
- After drawing names, suggest that students take some time individually to think about what their act(s) of kindness might be. Encourage students to be creative and challenge them to think of as many as they can. They may want to write ideas down as a reminder to themselves -- but be sure they keep these a surprise!

- Set a time for sharing who the kindness buddies were. Remind students the day before that time to ensure no one is left out of the final activity.
- Before revealing who the kindness buddies are, you may want to first have students think about or write down all the kind things that other students did for them that week and try to guess who their kindness buddy could be. This does not need to be shared.

WEB OF KINDNESS

- At the designated time, ask students to sit or stand in a circle. Ask for a volunteer to be the first student to speak and demonstrate:
 - Take the ball of yarn and loosely wrap it once around your wrist.
 - Then say: “My kindness buddy is _____, and my act of kindness was _____.”
 - Then, gently roll or toss the ball of yarn to your kindness buddy.
 - The kindness buddy will have a few moments to share how the act of kindness made them feel and say a few words of gratitude.
 - Then the buddy will reveal in the same way saying: “My kindness buddy is _____, and my act of kindness was _____.”
 - Then, wrap the yarn once around their wrist and finish by rolling or tossing the ball of yarn to the next kindness buddy.
 - This will continue until everyone has shared who their buddy was.
- The entire class will now be joined in a web of yarn. Ask:
 - *What does this web mean to you?*
 - *How did it make you feel to do something kind for your kindness buddy?*
 - *How did it make you feel when your buddy did something kind?*
 - *How do acts of kindness connect us to each other?*
 - *How can we help each other to do more acts of kindness?*

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

Do you, the teacher, notice any change in your students or overall classroom climate since doing this exercise?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

A study of nine to 11-year-olds found that those who performed [three acts of kindness](#), in comparison to those who created maps of places they had visited, increased their well-being and their popularity among peers.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Peer acceptance and a [sense of belonging](#) help to create a classroom climate that is warm and welcoming. Indeed, students who feel like they belong in school—that they matter to both [their teachers](#) and their peers—show greater academic achievement, are more engaged and motivated in school, and suffer from fewer psychological and social problems such as depression, peer rejection, and bullying.

Hence, giving students the opportunity to intentionally practice kindness and reflect on what it feels like to both give and receive kindness can help build classroom and school climates where kindness is a social norm.

SOURCE

"[Nurturing Gratitude From the Inside Out: 30 Activities for Grades K–8](#)" was originally developed by [The Inner Resilience Program](#), in partnership with the Greater Good Science Center and the John Templeton Foundation.

For the entire curriculum, click [here](#).