



Greater Good in Education
SCIENCE-BASED PRACTICES FOR KINDER, HAPPIER SCHOOLS

RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS

"Together we can change the world, just one random act of kindness at a time."

— Ron Hall

OVERVIEW

Students will engage in several acts of kindness using a method that leads to greater happiness.

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- To encourage students to engage in acts of kindness
- To build a more positive classroom and school community
- To help boost students' own happiness

TIME REQUIRED

- 1 day/6 weeks (Actual time per day will depend on students' acts of kindness. Could be anywhere from several minutes to several hours. Introducing this practice to the class will take about 10 minutes)

LEVEL

- PreK/Lower Elementary
- Upper Elementary
- Middle School
- High School
- College

MATERIALS

- Paper/journal
- Pencil/Pen

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Identify various acts of kindness that people engage in
- Perform five acts of kindness of their choosing
- Reflect on how they felt after each act of kindness

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
- Self Management
- Social Awareness
- Relationship Skills

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

Choose one day to engage in five acts of kindness for your colleagues or students. After each act, write down what you did and how it made you feel.

INSTRUCTIONS

Provide students with a brief introduction to this practice. For middle and high school students, it could be a very brief intro to the research behind this practice and say they're going to test it out. For younger students, it could be a discussion about why it is important to be kind, how being the recipient of other's acts of kindness makes them feel, and how they feel when they are able to perform kind acts to others.

If working with older students, tell them that for the next 6 weeks they will be asked to choose 1 day each week in which they will complete the following exercise. For younger students, you may consider simply engaging in 5 acts of kindness together as a class or even reducing the number of kindness acts to 2 or 3.

- Remind students that the acts do not need to be for the same person—the person doesn't even have to be aware of them. As a class, you may want to have students create a list on the board of examples, so that all students have an idea of the kinds of acts they could do. Examples for older students could include feeding a stranger's parking meter, picking up litter, helping a friend with a chore, or providing a meal to a person in need. Examples for younger students could include holding the door open for a teacher, helping to clear up a mess they didn't make, donating some of their old books to the school library, picking up litter, or offering to play with someone who's on their own.
- Perform five acts of kindness—all five in one day (less for younger students). It doesn't matter if the acts are big or small, but it is more powerful if students perform a variety of acts.

- After each act, students should write down what they did in at least one or two sentences and write down how it made them feel.

CLOSURE

After the set 6 weeks or after the chosen single day, host a reflection circle with students in which they share how their experiences went. You may use the following questions:

- What sort of acts of kindness did you do?
- What sort of responses did you receive?
- How did you feel? Were you surprised by your own feelings?

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

- Did you notice changes in students' mood or behavior? Have students been kinder to one another?
- What impact might a practice like this have on the school climate, especially if students worked together on performing acts of kindness for others? For older students, consider showing students this [video](#) of an 8th grade class that engaged in random acts of kindness for the entire school, and the impact it had on students, staff, and community members. Here's a [practice](#) that offers ideas for using this video with students.

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.

In addition, adult participants in a [study](#) who performed five acts of kindness every week for six weeks saw a significant boost in happiness, but only if they performed their five acts in a single day rather than spread out over each week. This may be because many acts of kindness are small, so spreading them out might make them harder to remember and savor.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Acts of kindness have profound effects—not only on the recipient but on the giver, as well. Acts of kindness can help cultivate feelings of happiness in the giver, and have been linked to positive health effects, such as [lower blood pressure](#).

Furthermore, acts of kindness can help foster positive relationships and create [ripple effects](#). Acts of kindness help develop school communities in which students are more [motivated](#), and thus, [thrive academically](#).

SOURCE

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