

Maintaining (and Promoting) Mental and Emotional Wellness with an ***Abundance of Kindness***  
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Kindness towards yourself and kindness towards others may be one of the best “psychological medicines” to take and give during these unprecedented times of worry, uncertainty and loss. *On a side note, significantly reducing---20 minutes max a day--- watching and reading the news about COVID- 19 is also quite helpful and recommended strongly.* Back to kindness.

**So How Does Kindness Work to Improve and Maintain Your Mental Wellness?**

When you are in the middle of acts of expressing kindness, your body relaxes and smiles. You often feel generous and have a spirit of gratitude. When you express kindness, your eyeballs are turned out. You are seeing what is around you and you notice the humanity in others. Kindness is both an expression of empathy and appreciation. In that expression, your internal narrative says, “I have enough right now, I am not consumed with only what I need and I have the spirit and energy to offer of myself.” What a gift this narrative has on your mental state of mind and wellness. Research suggests a positive correlation between the number of kind acts and increases in one’s happiness. As a bonus, they found that observing acts of kindness, have equally positive effects on happiness. When your body is relaxed, smiling and you are feeling happy this is a protective factor against anxiety, feeling sorry for yourself and depression.

**Acts of Kindness Promotes Mental Wellness in Others—“You Made My Day”**

Whether it be from a stranger or someone you know, receiving unexpected (and even expected) acts of kindness has a way of positively jolting the receiver’s current state of mind. The feeling of being seen and noticed by the other, usually brings a smile and feeling of warmth, both physically and emotionally. The internal narratives the person receiving the act of kindness experiences may be cognitions such as:

“I am not alone, humanity can be so generous, I feel so fortunate, and You made my day.” Most of us remember even the smallest acts of receiving kindness. The words and actions have most likely stuck with you consciously and unconsciously. I encourage you to remember just how powerful these words or actions of kindness have stuck with you.

**Kindness is Contagious...Pass it On.**

Aesop, the ancient Greek storyteller said, “No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.” When one receives actions of kindness, it is very likely they will pass on the good feeling to others. What a great antibody to all the stress and worry we are experiencing. I encourage you to get an antibody test for passing on and receiving kindness. Measure it now and then in a couple of weeks after you try a few of the suggestions below:

**Try to Avoid a Jerry Seinfeld Reaction**

Jerry was annoyed when he let a driver into his lane and he did not get the “customary” thank-you wave. Remember that episode? It ate him up on the inside and could not let it go. Bottom line: Manage your expectations when you offer kindness to other.

### **What Does Passing on Kindness Look Like During these Trying Times?**

- Can I pick you something at the store?
- “I appreciate you”---say this to someone 3X a day for best results.
- Sending a surprise gift to someone you care about for no reason.
- A smile and thank-you wave (with physical distance) to a cashier, mailperson, garbage collector, gardener.
- Thank-you email to those working behind the scenes- an administrator, state or city politician.
- Texting a health care worker you know...saying hi and let them know you are thinking of them.
- A smile to a stranger as you pass them on a walk.
- Donate resources or money to worthy causes
- Reaching out to folks who may be most impacted.
- Give yourself a gift of kindness with a forgiving attitude that sometimes: sleeping in is ok, eating more of what you like is ok, taking an extra nap is ok, feeling unmotivated is understandable, and having a difficult time concentrating will happen.
- Last but not least: **We Become Kinder with Practice**