

OBJECTIVE

To understand that kindness is good for the body.

RESOURCES NEEDED

Person booklet sheet – one per child printed onto either A3 or A4, scissors, coloured pens/pencils.

WARM-UP
(2 minutes)

Lead the class through some stretches/exercises to warm up the body. Talk briefly about how exercise is good for our bodies in so many ways - for e.g. it gets blood flowing around the body delivering oxygen and nutrients to your organs, it's good for your heart and it helps your muscles grow. You could finish with the 'power pose' introduced in our 'Kindness is Powerful' lesson.

INTRODUCTION

Tell the children that: today we are going to be learning about some of the ways kindness affects our bodies.

Watch the **Kindness and the body video**. (In this video, Greig talks to the scientist Dr David Hamilton about some of the ways that kindness is good for the body.) Show the children the slide with the 4 positive effects of kindness. Ask the children if they can think of a symbol to represent each one. They can then draw their symbols for each one on a piece of paper and, working in pairs, see if their partner can guess which symbol is for which benefit. Remove the list from the board. How many of the positive effects of kindness can they remember? Can they turn to their partner and list them?

ACTIVITY

Children make and decorate a flap-book shaped like a person. They fold the sheet in half and cut out the person so that they have a booklet that is joined at the arms and legs. On the front they write '**kindness**'. On the inside they write the 4 positive effects of kindness on the body. They could use the symbols they thought of in the introduction to illustrate each of the positive effects. They could think about where to place the words to best illustrate their meaning e.g. 'good for your heart' could be written inside a heart.

Differentiation – Depending on your class, you might want to use the internet to do some research into how kindness is good for our body. <https://schoolofkindness.org/science-of-kindness>

ACTIVITY
CONTD.

Tell the children that you want them to imagine that they are the scientist who discovered all the ways that kindness is good for the body. They can then work in pairs to interview one another as though they are on TV (use imaginary microphone). The interviewer can ask what their interviewee has discovered about kindness. They can use their flap-book to help them answer.

PLENARY

Ask if any children would like to volunteer to perform their news report in front of the class.

Remind children that Greig ended the video saying, **‘Isn’t it amazing that when you’re kind, you’re not just helping someone else, you’re helping yourself!’** Everybody benefits from kindness!

If you have time, you might like to play, **‘On my day of kindness, I...’**. This game is like ‘My grandmother’s suitcase’ but with acts of kindness. The premise is that you are recalling a day when you did as many kind things as you could. Go around the circle taking turns to add to the list, including a mime. Eg. ‘On my day of kindness, I smiled at my teacher’ then ‘On my day of kindness, I smiled at my teacher and helped my mum make breakfast’ then ‘On my day of kindness, I smiled at my teacher, helped my mum make breakfast and held the door open for someone’ etc. How many can you remember?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS:

The objective of this lesson is simply for children to know that kindness is good for the body. If you are interested in reading more about the science behind this yourself, here is some further information.

When we have a **‘pro-social’** experience, our hypothalamus (a small region at the base of our brain) releases the hormone oxytocin into our blood stream.

‘Pro-social’ experiences include: ~ warm emotional contact (such as kind conversations) ~ comforting someone ~ helping or supporting someone ~ seeing somebody else being kind ~ thinking about somebody you care about or thinking kindly about someone ~ smiling ~ comforting touch, such as hugging

When oxytocin is released into our blood stream, it has many positive effects.

- The cells that line our arteries have oxytocin receptors. When oxytocin reaches these receptors, the cells in our arterial walls produce nitric oxide and our hearts produce Atrial Natriuretic Peptide (ANP).
- Nitric Oxide and ANP are both powerful vasodilators. This means that they cause the arteries to dilate or widen. As a consequence, more blood can flow through the arteries delivering oxygen and nutrients to the heart and other organs. Plus, arterial dilation means that blood pressure is decreased. Both of these factors provide protection against heart attack and stroke.
- Nitric Oxide also helps lower LDL (bad) cholesterol levels preventing build-up of plaque in our arteries which can lead to heart disease and stroke.
- Oxytocin reduces oxidative stress and inflammation throughout our bodies including our immune systems.
- Oxytocin and nitric oxide can help slow aging via several different pathways including enhancing vagal tone and slowing down the shortening of telomeres.
- Oxytocin has been shown to reduce activity in the amygdala (the part of the brain which is active when we feel fearful or stressed). Pro-social experiences can therefore help us to feel calm.

In addition, it has been found that:

- Emotions associated with kindness can raise salivary immunoglobulin-A levels (s-IgA). S-IgA is an important component of the immune system.
- Kindness can reduce stress which can help offset the risk stress poses to our cardiovascular health.

The gene that produces oxytocin is over 500 million years old. It is intricately involved in many of our body's systems. It means that kindness (or pro-social behaviour) feels good and is good for us. Kindness is a fundamental part of our human nature. It makes sense in evolutionary terms that humans would have evolved to be kind. Social groups would have helped early humans survive by providing safety in numbers and allowing for the sharing of resources. Natural selection would therefore have favoured those humans who were better at forming social relationships as they would have been more likely to have survived to pass on their social traits to their offspring. The benefits of kindness arise whenever we feel kind. It could be thinking kind thoughts, doing something with the intention of helping somebody, watching somebody else being kind, or having positive, warm interactions with others. Interestingly, oxytocin is also produced when we practise being kind to ourselves. It doesn't really matter where the kindness is directed; when we feel care and compassion in our hearts, it is good for our bodies.

This information is adapted from **'The Five Side Effects of Kindness'** by Dr David Hamilton.