

THE SCIENCE OF KINDNESS

Kindness helps our minds and bodies in so many ways...here are just a few of the amazing effects it has on our health.

KINDNESS CAN HELP US FEEL HAPPIER

When we experience kindness, a hormone called dopamine is released in our brain which gives us a feeling of elevation and lifts our mood – it's often referred to as 'Helper's High'.

KINDNESS IS GOOD FOR THE HEART

Have you noticed that when you are kind to someone you feel good inside? Acts of kindness are often accompanied by a feeling of emotional warmth, which in turn produces the hormone oxytocin in your body. Oxytocin causes the release of a chemical called nitric oxide, which expands your blood vessels, reduces blood pressure and protects your heart.

KINDNESS SLOWS AGEING

Kindness has been shown to slow the ageing process. Remarkable research found that oxytocin can reduce levels of free radicals and inflammation (two main culprits of ageing) in our cardiovascular system, which slows ageing at the source.

KINDNESS IMPROVES RELATIONSHIPS

We tend to like people who show us kindness. This is because kindness reduces the emotional distance between two people and helps us feel more 'bonded'. Our evolutionary ancestors had to learn to cooperate with one another. The stronger the emotional bonds within groups, the greater were the chances of survival and so 'kindness genes' were etched into the human genome. So today, when we are kind to each other, we feel a connection that strengthens our existing relationships and helps us to create new ones.

KINDNESS IS CONTAGIOUS

Just as a pebble creates waves when it is dropped in a pond, so acts of kindness ripple outwards. When we are kind, we inspire others to be kind and studies show that it actually creates a ripple effect that spreads outwards to our friends' friends' friends – that's an amazing three degrees of separation! This means that when you are kind to one person, that one act of kindness will positively affect up to 125 people!



**KINDNESS IS
TEACHABLE - IT'S LIKE
WEIGHT TRAINING!**

People can actually build up their compassion 'muscle' and respond to others suffering with care and a desire to help.



**KINDNESS
CAN BOOST YOUR
ENERGY LEVELS**

About half of participants in one study reported that they feel stronger and more energetic after helping others; many also reported feeling calmer and less depressed, with increased feelings of self-worth.

Source: Christine Carter, UC Berkeley, Greater Good Science Center



**KINDNESS CAN
RELIEVE PAIN**

Kindness produces endorphins, which are the brain's natural painkiller.



**KINDNESS CAN
REDUCE STRESS**

Perpetually kind people have 23% less cortisol (the stress hormone) than the average population.

Source: Integrative Psychological and Behavioural Science, 1998.

Thank you to our Scientific Advisor, Dr David Hamilton, for his expertise.

VISIT WWW.SCHOOLOFKINDNESS.ORG TO FIND OUT MORE.

52 Lives is a charity registered in England and Wales (1166238)

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