



Kind Campus MONTH 2

Creating a KIND Campus

How do we create the foundation for the ongoing practice of intentional kindness?



Understanding our Social and Emotional Brains

The Conscious and the Unconscious Brain: Understanding the way our brains work is crucial to practicing kindness—both toward ourselves and others. The more we understand how our brains function, the more we can lead others in practicing intentional kindness. The unconscious brain plays a primary role in forming memories and responses to emotional events—particularly to fearful events. It also controls our responses to fear, such as fight, flight, or freeze, and is known as our reptile or lizard brain. It helps us sense and respond to danger (Man, Ames, Todorov, & Cunningham, 2016). When our unconscious brain is activated, we're in reactive mode and it can be hard for us to be kind. The goal is to shift to our conscious brain, where higher-level thinking occurs, including empathy and other positive emotions (Hanson, 2011). This part of our brain empowers us to respond thoughtfully with kindness, rather than just reacting.



Self-Awareness

Positive Affirmation Phrase: Last month, we worked on becoming aware of self-critical thoughts by noticing them, and we learned about responding to them by redirecting our thoughts (see Month 1). This month, try creating a one- or two-sentence affirmation to repeat when feeling stressed. The goal is to notice our thoughts and then learn to change our response to these thoughts. These positive affirmations may confirm your humanity (“I am a human and just like everyone, I make mistakes”) and/or be a reminder to practice self-kindness (“May I treat myself with kindness while I am going through this experience”). Write down the affirmation and repeat it often (Hayes, Strosahl & Wilson, 2012).



Awareness of Others

Just Like Me: Talk about how easily we can feel different from others, and how focusing on difference can lead us to be unkind. This is especially true when someone is disrespectful, or holds a much different opinion than we do. Explain that if we focus on a kind state of mind, then we can prioritize connections, rather than differences. The following prompts will help students see their connections:

- 1) Ask students to stand in 2 lines facing one another.
- 2) The leader reads the following statements while students face one another:
 - This person has a body and a mind, just like me.
 - This person has feelings, emotions, and thoughts, just like me.
 - This person has experienced physical and emotional pain and suffering, just like me.
- 3) As a class, come up with several more “just like me” statements.
- 4) Encourage students to think of one positive wish for their partners.
- 5) Lead students in saying, “Because this person is a fellow human being, just like me.”
- 6) Have one line shift places so that everyone has a new partner.
- 7) Repeat the exercise for as long as it resonates with students.



Creating a KIND Campus: Kindness in Action



Self-Kindness

Importance of Sleep: A mountain of research exists about the importance of sleep. For instance, sleep deprivation negatively impacts our attention span, memory, cognitive functions, and overall quality of life (Alhola & Polo-Kantola, 2007). Certainly, practicing kindness is more difficult when you're sleep-deprived! Commit as a class to making sleep a priority. Using a simple drawing of a thermometer or a scale from 1-10, ask students to rate how they feel. How does your body feel when you wake up? Do you have any aches or pains? Do you feel tired or well rested? When we get enough sleep, we're more in tune with our bodies and can better advocate for what we need. Post the thermometer on the Kind Campus Bulletin Board, encouraging students, staff, and faculty to participate.



Kindness Toward Others

“be kind” Code: Clear expectations can support an environment in which kindness can thrive. We used to think that asking students to participate in developing rules would undermine a teacher's authority. But evidence shows that setting limits in ways that support student autonomy supports more intrinsic motivation to learn. Consider the time you spend creating your “be kind” Code a wise investment for the school year. See “Creating Your ‘be kind’ Code” in the supplementary materials for a step-by-step guide.



Kindness Dilemmas

Peer Interactions: For this month's kindness dilemmas (see samples online), lead your students through more complex dilemmas that will challenge their problem-solving skills—dilemmas between friends. Continue with the classroom method from the Kindness Dilemma Discussion Guide (see supplementary materials), adding small group or paired discussions to provide more time for dialogue.



Adult Practice

“Mini Bell” Committee: Begin the custom of publicly recognizing students, faculty, and staff who model intentional kindness by honoring them with Mini Ben's Bells (<https://bensbells.org/shop/mini-bell>). Start by forming a “Mini Bell” committee that will assess nominations. Invite students from different grades, as well as staff and faculty, to participate, and then rotate committee members throughout the school year. Each month, after the committee has selected the “bellee,” find a time to recognize the honoree. Try surprising the selected “bellee” at a school assembly, during announcements, or through another public forum. Each month the Mini Ben's Bell is passed along to the next recipient.



Our Kindness Priorities This Month

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Share photos of creating your "be kind" Code with us!



"Making kindness a daily effort and a part of everybody's vocabulary makes a big difference on campus and in the surrounding community."

-Classroom teacher, Glendale, AZ