

Kind Campus
MONTH 4

Kindness Commitment



Our Kindness
Commitment

How can we maintain a daily kindness practice?



Understanding our Social and Emotional Brains

Metacognition: Metacognition is the concept of thinking about our thinking. It's a practice of understanding our thought process in the moment and without judgment, so that we can be prepared to respond with kindness. Learning to perceive our thoughts as something separate from ourselves helps us develop the self-awareness necessary "to examine and understand who we are relative to the world around us" (Price-Mitchell, 2015). Reflecting on our learning process builds metacognition, and weekly reflection about our thinking reshapes our brain's structure, helping us become more adaptable, open-minded, and kind. Also, exciting research shows that our metacognitive skills increase as we age, especially between ages 12 and 15 (Price-Mitchell, 2015).



Self-Awareness

Awareness of Complaining and Blaming: It's normal to complain about aspects of our lives. But psychologist Guy Winch cautions that complaining can have negative impacts on our health. When we get stuck in a loop and feel powerless to effect change, it can lower self-esteem and make us feel mistreated. The key is to complain effectively, staying focused on processing information and coming up with realistic solutions. Complaining effectively actually benefits our mental health (2012)! Complaining can easily turn into blaming—searching for someone or something to hold responsible for an action, a lack of action, or a frustration or hurt. Professor Brené Brown concludes, "blame is simply the discharging of pain and discomfort. We blame when we're uncomfortable ... vulnerable, angry, hurt, in shame, grieving. There's nothing productive about blame" (2015). So while it's normal to blame, building self-awareness helps us hold ourselves accountable and create better solutions to problems. Mindfulness and self-kindness practices moderate our impulses to complain and blame, and encourage others to do the same.



Awareness of Others

Community Partner Info Sheets: Kindness empowers us to step up and have challenging and vulnerable conversations that may ultimately create more connected schools. Kind Campus includes information sheets from community partners that provide advice about the ways kindness can be utilized to create positive social change. With this information, teachers and staff may lead students through challenging conversations and think about how kindness can be a productive and welcoming framework to address issues of identity, inclusion, equity, and justice. Choose any of the Community Partner Info Sheets (see supplementary materials) to get started.



Kindness Starts with Me: Kindness in Action



Self-Kindness

Importance of Exercise: Exercising daily is one of the kindest things we can do for our bodies. Reports show that students who regularly exercise achieve more academic success, improve their cognitive performance, cultivate positive classroom behaviors, and even improve their attendance (CDC, 2014). In fact, Dr. Aaron Carroll notes how dozens of randomized trials conclude that regular exercise improves health outcomes in a variety of physical and mental diseases (2016). Help students build self-awareness around exercise through guided questions: How does your body feel after you exercise? What sensations do you notice? What are your mood and energy levels like as you go about the rest of the day? Encourage students to incorporate exercise into daily life by parking farther away, going on a walk with family or friends, or coming up with active games to play during recess or break time. Encourage staff and faculty to join, too!



Kindness Toward Others

Kindness “Shout Out” on Morning Announcements: Turn up the kindness quotient in your school by incorporating a regular kindness “shout out” on morning announcements. This daily or weekly reinforcement of your school’s kind culture will keep kindness skills at the front of students’ minds, and will provide support to the Kind Campus community. Welcome new students and staff to your Kind Campus, acknowledge classroom efforts, and praise growth in individual students. Come up with a protocol for making public recognition a part of your morning announcements so that people feel valued for their contributions to your kind culture.



Kindness Dilemmas

Problem Solving in Real Life: Before beginning this month’s practice, discuss how we can use our kind problem-solving skills in our real lives. Are there times when we struggle with kindness in the classroom? On the playground? With siblings or friends at home? Encourage students to share moments when they’ve drawn on the kindness skills they have practiced during Kindness Dilemmas. After your discussion, choose a dilemma from the provided samples (or create your own) to discuss as a class, including small groups or individual practice if desired. Begin applying the steps to real problems as they arise in the classroom.



Adult Practice

Self-Kindness Board: One of the most difficult times to be kind to ourselves is when we’re under pressure at work. To cultivate self-compassion among your staff and faculty, create a Kind Team bulletin board with current pictures and baby pictures of staff members. Encourage staff members to practice seeing one another as children, remembering that we are all perfectly flawed as human beings. The hope is for us to feel compassion for the tiny version of ourselves pictured in the photos, and then to transfer that self-kindness to the present. Hang your board in a common space and encourage colleagues to share stories from childhood that they are proud of.



Our Kindness Priorities This Month

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Share photos of your staff's Self-Kindness Board with us!



"I love Kind Campus because it is simple. It can be woven into other social emotional curriculums/programs or used independently. Our students are very receptive to the Be Kind message!"

-School counselor, Danbury, CT