

# Kind Campus MONTH 6

## Courage to be Kind



### How can we be kind in tough situations?



#### Understanding our Social and Emotional Brains

**Kind vs. Nice:** People often use the terms “nice” and “kind” interchangeably. But it’s helpful to think about why they’re different. Being “nice” emphasizes being agreeable and polite—not rocking the boat, avoiding difficult conversations, and keeping things on a superficial level. But being “kind” is about the greater good. It’s a powerful skill-set that requires great courage and careful thought. Kindness is about taking care of ourselves and one another. It’s intentional and it’s something we can do daily that encourages connections and reduces fears. So whereas being nice can increase stress, being kind relieves stress and empowers us to act with intention, to be deliberate and thoughtful in how we communicate. Kindness isn’t always easy—sometimes it’s incredibly difficult to be kind! But kindness is within our power if we commit to practicing it.

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#### Self-Awareness

**Take Five:** This breathing activity is an accessible technique that can help manage stress and calm our bodies and minds. Remind students that we’re all working on skills that help us soothe our thinking and concentrate our minds. Doing Take Five together is a great transition between lessons or as a calming activity to help students re-focus. As you do this activity, you can increase the time from “Take Five” to “Take Ten,” or you can start with the longer timeframe with older students. An adult or student may lead this exercise by following the script provided online (see supplementary materials).

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#### Awareness of Others

**“Ripple Effect” Bulletin Board:** With your class, club, or team, brainstorm a list of kind acts that you might do or see on campus. (Or, have your Kind Leadership Team brainstorm a list of kind acts and share them with the school.) Using these ideas, create “Ripple Effect” posters to hang around school or on the Kind Campus Bulletin Board. Write the kind act in the center of the poster, then draw a circle around it. Think about how that one act of kindness affects the surrounding community (individuals or the environment). Draw a line from the center, and write down the effect. Leave plenty of space for students, staff, and faculty to add more connections to the kind act, and track how far one kind act can spread.



# Courage to be Kind: Kindness in Action



## Self-Kindness

**Healthy Eating:** We know that healthy eating is kind because numerous physical and emotional health problems can be avoided through wise food choices. Healthy eating isn't just what we eat, but how we eat—eating mindfully, limiting distractions, and practicing gratitude for the food's source and its chef. When students eat healthfully, they have stronger academic records, better attendance, fewer behavior challenges, and improved overall cognitive function (CDC, 2014). Discuss why it's challenging for some people to eat healthfully—"food deserts," cost of healthy ingredients, time constraints, etc. Then guide students in researching and discussing tips for healthy eating, including suggestions for meals and snacks. Help students build mindfulness around eating with guiding questions: How does your body feel after you eat healthy food? What sensations do you notice? What are your mood and energy levels like after a healthy meal or snack?

Encourage healthy eating as a priority by creating a classroom poster on which you list these choices as a visual reminder that kindness to our bodies involves healthy food. Create a classroom challenge in which students try to eat the most fruits and vegetables for a week, and encourage students to share the challenge with their families.

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## Kindness Toward Others

**Create a Kindness Tree:** In one of your school hallways, or in individual classrooms, create a "kindness tree." Paint the tree on a wall, if your school allows, or create a construction paper tree that you tape to the wall. Demonstrate how your school grows its kindness over the course of the year by adding a flower to your tree when a student or staffer observes a kind act. Set a schoolwide goal to commit a certain number of kind acts during the year, and help spread kindness throughout your campus.

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## Kindness Dilemmas

**Kind Communication:** The language we use when dealing with conflict profoundly impacts how a message is received. Start by brainstorming some comments we make when we're reacting from our reptile/lizard brain (unconscious brain) in anger or frustration. (Examples might include: "You're so mean!" "Stop being a jerk!" "He's a bully!"). List as many phrases as possible, then work through the list and try to reframe each one using less defensive, kindness-focused language. Practice shifting from your reptile/lizard brain to your thinking, or conscious, brain. Our conscious brain is the region where higher-level thinking occurs, and where we develop empathy and compassion. Discuss what happens when we shift our language toward kindness.

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## Adult Practice

**Kindness During Tough Conversations:** Many of us avoid difficult conversations, believing we're doing so out of kindness. But if we're actually being kind, then we'll talk to someone directly—with compassion and vulnerability. Take a moment to move out of your defensive brain and into your conscious brain, and enter the conversation with interest and respect. Try to avoid preconceived notions about how the conversation will unfold. Instead, focus on what the other person says, rather than obsessing about your own language. Practice mindful listening, where you reflect and observe what the other says so you can come to a resolution together. Finally, don't shy away from stating things clearly (Garfinkle, 2017). Gentle matter-of-factness is what empowers us to have tough conversations with kindness, and to feel more connected when we've finished.



## Our Kindness Priorities This Month

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Share photos of your School's Kindness Tree with us!



“Kindness is the wave of the future and the Kind Campus is a great way to implement readymade ideas with our students!”

-School Administrator, Tucson, AZ