

## Kind Campus 2021-22 Month 5 Emails



### Theme: Allowing Time for Kindness

*Why should we make time to practice kindness?*

#### Week 1 email

**Kindness is a Skill:** In order to make kindness part of our daily lives, it's important to remember that kindness is a skill, and that, like all skills, it takes practice and upkeep. When kind behavior and actions are motivated and supported, they can be developed and strengthened over time. Allowing ourselves the time to do this work means keeping kindness salient and front of mind so that it becomes a natural part of our everyday lives and environment. Dr. Lauren C. Howe notes that, "People may believe that their weaknesses will be lost over time, but that their strengths are there to stay. Because of this, we might not be very motivated to work on our strengths. Imagine a person who feels that they are a particularly kind person, and that this will never change. She or he might not take the time to cultivate kindness even further—for instance, to go out of her or his way to volunteer or help other people. Perhaps this person would instead let these habits slide, and—secure in her or his "kindness"—would actually become less kind over time. If we don't actively engage with our strengths, we might see them fade.<sup>1</sup>" As kindness becomes one of our strengths, the benefits and impact are a continuing journey rather than a finite set of expertise. Remind students that kindness is not always easy; it takes practice, and that's OK!

#### Question of the Month

*Why should we make time to practice kindness? What will happen if we make time regularly?*

#### Kindness Quote and Science Posters

#### Week 2 email

## Self-Kindness

**Benefits of Taking Breaks:** In addition to being kind to our minds and bodies, a short break can also improve productivity. This may seem counterintuitive — it may never feel as though there's enough time to take a break, or that it will slow your momentum. But research indicates that when we focus on a single task for a prolonged period of time, our attention naturally wanders. Taking a break and then returning to the task, also called “goal reactivation,” improves our focus, attention, and performance, and allows us to engage in sustained mental efforts<sup>2</sup>.

**Activity: Stretching and Breathing:** This is a simple exercise that can help students build awareness of their thoughts and how they affect their bodies. This activity works well as a 5-10 minute break in class and may help students reduce stress and increase focus. Talk with students about why it's important for us to learn skills to calm ourselves and focus. Then lead the activity by following [this script](#).

## Week 3 email

### Kindness in Action: Everyday Practices

**Mindful Listening:** Careful listening is difficult, but we can develop mindful listening skills with simple practice. Mindful listening asks us to be in the present moment and focus on what the other person is saying rather than being quick to offer our own take or letting our minds wander to something else. Dr. Elizabeth Dorrance Hall recommends “showing interest and support through maintaining eye contact, nodding, smiling, and encouraging [the speaker] to express their thoughts” as well as “giv[ing] others the space to share without interrupting, advising, or correcting them.”<sup>3</sup> One study found that “high-quality (i.e., empathic, attentive, and nonjudgmental) listening reduces speakers’ social anxiety and leads them to delve deeper into greater self-awareness,<sup>4</sup>” leading to more open-minded conversations. Focusing on how we listen contributes to healthier and more constructive communication and is a valuable part of our kindness practice.

Have students pair up with the goal of mindful listening. Each student talks for two minutes about their day or an important experience while their partner listens without interruption or judgment. At the end of the two minutes, the listening partner describes what they heard. Switch roles and repeat. Have students reflect on the importance of listening respectfully to their friends, family, and peers.

## Week 4 email

### Kindness in Action: Everyday Practices

**Kindness Coins:** Kindness Coins are a tool to practice connecting with kindness, rather than an expected reward for kindness. The best rewards for kindness are intrinsic. Each coin comes with a tag that states, in English and Spanish, “This is a Ben's Bells Kindness Coin. Thank you for

sharing your kindness. Pass it on.” Kindness Coins serve as helpful reminders to slow down, become aware of our emotions, and practice intentional kindness.

Introduce Kindness Coins to your school as a mission for your students, staff, and faculty to seek and find kindness. Begin by randomly passing out Kindness Coins from our [Shop](#), or small tokens that students have made on their own. When participants see moments of kindness—or want to practice gratitude—they pass along their Kindness Coins. Visit our [The Power of a Kindness Coin](#) guide for ideas and much more.

If your classroom is remote, have students make and decorate their own tokens out of paper or cardboard to be handed around as kindness recognition at home. Begin class sessions each day asking students for examples of giving out their tokens and how it made them feel.

#### References:

1. Howe, L.C. (2016, May 24). *A Self-Improvement Secret: Work on Strengths*. Scientific American. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-self-improvement-secret-work-on-strengths/>.
2. Ariga, A., & Lleras, A. (2011). “Brief and rare mental ‘breaks’ keep you focused: Deactivation and reactivation of task goals preempt vigilance decrements.” *Cognition*, 118(3), 439–443. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21211793/>.
3. Hall, E.D. (2017, Mar 31). *Mindful Listening: Using empathy to listen instead of offering advice*. Psychology Today. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/conscious-communication/201703/mindful-listening>.
4. Itzchakov, G. (2018). “The Listener Sets the Tone: High-Quality Listening Increases Attitude Clarity and Behavior-Intention Consequences.” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Vol 44, Issue
5. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0146167217747874>.