

Kind Campus 2021-22 Month 9 Emails



Theme: Celebrate Your Kind Community

How can we become more aware of kindness in our community so we can experience all of its benefits?

Week 1 email

Being Kind to Unkind People: It's not always easy to be kind, and it's particularly challenging when someone is rude or dismissive. Our tendency is to mirror the emotions, feelings, and mood of that person. This is called "complementary behavior" and it's the behavior we expect. When someone is warm to us, we're warm in return. Likewise, if someone is impolite, our tendency is to react with similar disrespect. But psychology professor Christopher J. Hopwood affirms that we can choose to act differently by using noncomplementary behavior, which is more difficult because it contradicts expected behavior. For example, we can act with intentional kindness when someone has been rude. Hopwood advises that noncomplementary behavior can sometimes be tensely received, so we should use it in the context of trusting relationships.¹ When we're regularly practicing our kindness skills and feel good about ourselves, we can treat people with kindness, even if their initial behavior was unkind. It can also be an act of self-kindness to decline to mirror negative behaviors. In this and many ways, our kindness practice can contribute to creating kinder communities.

Question of the Month

How can we become more aware of kindness in our community so we can experience all of its benefits?

Kindness Quote and Science Posters

Week 2 email

Self-Kindness

The Benefits of Music: We know from experience that music has a substantial emotional component. It may evoke strong memories or nostalgia, make us feel connected to a group of people, or get us excited for an event. Music activates pleasure centers in the brain, which helps to explain why all human cultures place high societal value on music.² Studies also show that highly empathic people tend to find music listening more pleasurable,³ and that music-making can facilitate prosocial behavior in preschoolers such as sharing and helping.⁴ Listening to music that you enjoy is a great way to be kind to yourself and experience benefits such as a boost in positive mood, reduced stress and anxiety, better sleep, and increased motivation. It may even improve immune functioning⁵ and is a great way to learn about other cultures across the globe. Explore new music or put on old favorites often as part of your kindness practice.

Week 3 email

Kindness in Action: Everyday Practices

Changing Behavior Patterns: Talk with students about how difficult it is to change habits. The first step is identifying that we need to make a change. Then we must recognize that we have the ability to change our behavior by building self-awareness. Have students make a list of three strengths they are proud of, and three difficulties that they face when practicing kindness. How did they work to overcome these challenges? Ask students to share items from either list with the class. This self-reflective exercise helps students gain insight into their own lives as well as the lives of their fellow students. Discuss innovative ways of changing behavior so that students can respond with kindness (conscious brain), rather than react with defensiveness (unconscious brain). Considering the different options we have in life helps students think about building self-awareness, which empowers us to make choices that are kind to ourselves. It also helps us change behavior, so it's kind to others too.

Week 4 email

Kindness in Action: Everyday Practices

Kindness to Plants: Plants, just like animals and humans, are an important part of our community. Explore what plants provide us, and what we can do to care for them. Have students work in groups or pairs and choose an established plant on campus, or plant something new at home, to monitor and document changes. As students look for growth, new buds, and color, they provide care to help keep their plant healthy and growing, keeping in mind pruning, watering, or other needs.

Kindness to Animals: Brainstorm ways that students, staff, and faculty can be kind to the creatures in your community. Send home ["be kind to animals" cards](#) for students to share with

family and distribute in the community. Encourage students to talk with peers and adults about how caring for the Earth means creating a kind community for its creatures.

Kindness to the Environment: List ways that your school can be kind to the Earth by improving the environment in your community. Discuss why a diverse local ecosystem helps us all thrive and how preserving a safe environment for many species is an act of kindness. Hang posters around campus or start a social media contest to gather ideas for your school. Then commit to improving your community's environment this month. Some ideas might include a food-and-supply drive for your local animal shelter, collecting recyclables, or thinking of ways to create less waste.

References:

1. Hopwood, C.J. (2016, Jul 16). *Don't Do What I Do: How Getting Out Of Sync Can Help Relationships*. NPR. <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2016/07/16/485721853/dont-do-what-i-do-how-getting-out-of-sync-can-help-relationships>.
2. Salimpoor, V.N. et al (2011). "Anatomically distinct dopamine release during anticipation and experience of peak emotion to music." *Nature Neuroscience* 14, 257–262 <https://doi.org/10.1038/nn.2726>.
3. Wallmark, Z., Deblieck, C., & Iacoboni, M. (2018). "Neurophysiological Effects of Trait Empathy in Music Listening." *Frontiers in Behavioral Neuroscience* <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnbeh.2018.00066>.
4. Beck, S.L. & Rieser, J. (2020). "Non-random acts of kindness: Joint music making increases preschoolers' helping and sharing with an adult." *Psychology of Music* Vol 50, Issue 1, 2022 <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735620978688>.
5. Chanda, M.L. & Daniel J. Levitin, D.J. (2013). "The neurochemistry of music." *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* Volume 17, Issue 4, Pages 179-193 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2013.02.007>.