



KIND Campus

BEN'S BELLS PROJECT

MONTH 3

Kind Campus Month 4: Committing to Kindness



Question of the Month

Why does the practice of kindness take commitment? How can we practice kindness skills in small ways each day?

Kind Campus Week 1

Metacognition: Committing to the practice of kindness means incorporating kindness into your everyday life and engaging in the awareness and skill-building that leads to kind actions. A powerful way to bring awareness to your kindness practice is through **metacognition**: the concept of thinking about our thinking. It's a practice of understanding our thought process in the moment 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."¹ 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, research shows that our metacognitive skills increase as we age, especially between ages 12 and 15.² This process can lead to kinder communication as we practice putting distance between our thoughts and our communication by being able to observe them and developing an awareness of our behavior.

Kind Campus Week 2: Self-Kindness

Awareness of Complaining and Blaming: It's normal to complain about aspects of our lives. But psychologist Guy Winch cautions that complaining ineffectively 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 by improving our mood and self-esteem, and can also strengthen relationships!³ Complaining can easily turn into blaming—searching for someone or something to hold responsible for an action, a lack of action, 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.”⁴ 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 by “slowing down, listening, and leaving enough space for empathy to arise,”⁵ encouraging others to do the same.



Kind Campus Week 3: Kindness in Action with Everyday Practices

Be Kind Challenge: A great way to practice reflection and gratitude, document acts of kindness, and inspire others is to join the Be Kind Challenge! Have slips and pens/pencils available for students, and anyone who comes into your classroom, to document acts of kindness or thank someone for their kindness. Remind them that their own kind acts, or acts of self-kindness, count as well! Hang your chain in a place students will see every day and be able to watch it expand. Let it motivate you to recognize acts of kindness on a regular basis. Watching your chain grow and grow is a powerful visual reminder of the impact of kind acts and this ongoing activity will help keep kindness active on your campus. Find details, instructions, and inspiration [HERE](#).



Kind Campus Week 4: Kindness in Action: Everyday Practices

Kindness “Shout Out” on Morning Announcements: Turn up the kindness focus at your school by incorporating a regular kindness “shout out” on morning announcements, or in your own classroom, to begin the day. 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. Acknowledge individual acts of kindness or express gratitude. 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. This shared recognition helps emphasize the importance given to the practice of kindness on your campus and makes it a part of your routine.

Additional Activities

Ben's Bells Kindness Contract: Establishing a kindness practice takes commitment because kindness is not always easy. In life, there will be moments when we're under a lot of stress, we're not sure how to speak up or offer someone the support that they need, or we experience unkind behavior. Commit to Kindness together as a group and discuss how kindness resonates and how our choices impact those around us. Invite students and staff to sign a copy of the contract if they choose. Once they have signed, encourage participants to sign their name on a large poster, or on a Ben's Bells flower to post on a kindness tree in your classroom or hallway. Committing to kindness as a group creates a shared goal where we can feel encouraged, be held accountable, or ask for support.



Commit to Kindness
Elementary | Middle & High



'be kind' Poster



Flower Template

Kindness at Home

Like any developing skill, kindness asks us to commit to practicing regularly, and committing to kindness as a family can provide inspiration, encouragement, and accountability. Share information about the Be Kind Challenge with families and suggest that they extend the challenge from campus to their practice at home. Ask students to see if they can fill a room or space with colorful links representing kindness enacted or witnessed at home! Documenting kindness at home will strengthen the idea that everyone can perform and receive kindness. By committing to kindness, we recognize that our actions contribute to a kinder and more connected community.



References

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2. Stel, M. van der (2011). "Development of metacognitive skills in young adolescents: a bumpy ride to the high road." <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/17910>.
3. Winch, G. (2012, Jan 19). Does Complaining Damage Our Mental Health? Psychology Today. Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-squeaky-wheel/201201/does-complaining-damage-our-mental-health>.
4. Brown, B. (2012). Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead. New York: Gotham Books.
5. Brown, B. (2017, Aug 4). Two Lessons on Blame from Brené Brown. Mindful. Retrieved from <https://www.mindful.org/two-lessons-on-blame-from-brene-brown/>.

