



## Kind Campus Month 8: Gratitude for Kindness

### Question of the Month

What are the benefits of showing gratitude? How do we show thanks for the kindness we receive and for the good things in our lives?

### Kind Campus Week 1

**Friendship:** Our friendships are a valuable part of our kind community, and reflecting on what our friends bring to our lives is a great way to practice gratitude. Whether by realizing how much we enjoy our time with friends, or by appreciating those who have made the effort to support us when we need it, we know that strong friendships help us to connect and grow. Psychology professor Louis Cozolino notes that, "Of all the experiences we need to survive and thrive, it is the experience of relating to others that is the most meaningful and important...How we bond and stay attached to others is at the core of our resilience, self-esteem, and physical health."<sup>1</sup> Having strong social relationships can be beneficial to an individual's health and can actually increase longevity.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Elisha Goldstein suggests using kindness, empathy, and awareness to strengthen our relationships, because when we're kind to others it helps them to feel understood and connected which can have a ripple effect.<sup>3</sup> Who have you turned to when needing connection, support, or a good laugh? Send a note of thanks to your kind friends today!

## Kind Campus Week 2: Self-Kindness

**Reflecting on Kindness:** Research indicates that consciously reflecting on the positive aspects of one's life increases well-being — especially when compared with reflecting on complaints and hassles. Studies have demonstrated that intentionally reflecting on what we're grateful for increases optimism, positive mood, sleep quality, and a sense of connectedness with others.<sup>4</sup> Focusing on gratitude is a productive way to counteract our natural human negativity bias, and it's much easier to be kind when we feel grateful for our daily lives. Have students reflect on their kindness practice each day for a week. Potential prompts include: What does kindness mean to you? Why do you think kindness is important in your community? What is most difficult about kindness? Can you describe a time when you witnessed an act of kindness? Can you describe a time when someone was kind to you, and it made a difference in your day? Visiting the reasons behind our kindness practice will help to keep motivation strong, and answers can be revisited when looking for inspiration.



## Kind Campus Week 3: Kindness in Action with Everyday Practices

**Thank You Notes:** Research shows that teaching children to practice gratitude improves overall life contentment, helps kids feel connected, fosters a positive outlook, and even helps lessen anxiety.<sup>5</sup> Encourage students to express gratitude this month through learning to write Thank You Notes. For younger students, encourage them to draw a picture of the kind act, writing "Thank you, (name)" and "From, (their name)" below their drawing. For older students, discuss the three steps of expressing gratitude in writing:

1. What are you thankful for? (Thank you for...)
2. How did it make you feel? (It felt...)
3. Recognize kindness in the other person. (You are a kind person.)

Example: Thank you, Shawn, for sitting next to me at lunch. It felt good to have someone to talk to. You are a kind person.

Encourage students to show gratitude for different organizations that help make their communities kind places. Having students write Thank You Notes to these organizations is a great way to practice writing skills and intentional kindness at the same time!



**Thank You Notes**  
English | Spanish  
Lined | Primary Lined



## Kind Campus Week 4: Kindness in Action: Everyday Practices

**Effective Apologies:** We all make mistakes, but in our perfectionistic society there's pressure to always be right. That can make for people who don't know how to admit they're wrong, or how to apologize when they are. Researchers have confirmed the importance of helping children learn to apologize with sincerity. A school culture that encourages apologizing reduces physical aggression and fosters forgiveness, which benefits everyone.<sup>6</sup> Learning to apologize sincerely is a powerful kindness skill. It includes clearly stating "I'm sorry," keeping the focus on the apology itself, and avoiding a dynamic in which the apologizer needs to be comforted.

Help students learn to apologize genuinely using the following steps, or by creating your own outline. First, guide students in role-playing around apologizing and saying “I’m sorry” to other students. Use I’m Sorry Notes as a tool to apologize to friends, classmates, teachers, relatives, etc. when situations arise, and have students share examples of how it felt to apologize.

How to Say I’m Sorry:

1. I’m sorry for ... (I’m sorry for saying that nobody wants to be your friend).
2. This is wrong because ... (This is wrong because it hurt your feelings).
3. In the future, I will ... (In the future, I will reconsider unkind words).
4. Will you forgive me?



I’m Sorry Notes  
English | Spanish  
Lined | Primary Lined

Visit this link for an extended discussion.



## Additional Activities

### I Am...

This reflective exercise encourages students to think about all of the ways they’re striving to be kind at school and in their community. It offsets societal messages that we’re never enough or that there’s something wrong that needs improving. Repeating the positive “I am” phrases boosts confidence and helps students calm their minds and bodies. You can use the list provided here, or work together as a class to identify qualities you value.

### Kindness at Home

Ask students to reflect on what they’re grateful for in their homes, neighborhoods, and communities outside of school. How do these communities contribute to our kind experiences, and to our ability to practice kindness? How does expressing gratitude contribute to our well-being? Suggest students create a family gratitude jar at home for anyone in the household to contribute to. All are encouraged to write down things they’re grateful for and add to the jar. Gratitude can extend to a variety of focus areas, such as “I’m grateful for my dog,” “I’m grateful for this meal,” “I’m grateful for our mail carrier,” or “I’m grateful for my kind community.” Watching the jar fill with notes is a great way to bring focus to the benefits of expressing gratitude. It can help us to savor the positive and be reminded of community impact. Invite students to share notes from their gratitude jar in class if they would like.



## References

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