



## Kind Colleagues Month 4: Kindness Starts With Me



breathe in

### Question of the Month

Why is it important to be kind to ourselves? What are some everyday examples of self-kindness?

### Kind Colleagues Week 1

**Self-esteem vs. Self-kindness:** Unlike self-esteem, which may depend on a particular outcome such as performance, milestones, or praise, self-kindness is an unconditional attitude that we can embrace at all times. Research suggests that self-compassion, comprised of increased self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness, is “one of the most powerful sources of coping and resilience we have available to us, radically improving our mental and physical wellbeing.”<sup>1</sup> Self-compassion is a strong predictor of happiness and optimism, and may also promote resilience buffering against anxiety and depression.<sup>2,3</sup> Self-compassion is also associated with showing greater initiative, such as making positive changes in one’s life,<sup>4</sup> increased creative thinking,<sup>5</sup> and high performance standards.<sup>6</sup> It can also play a part in the forming of strong workplace relationships, which are fundamental for the success of the organization.<sup>7</sup> As Psychologist Kristin Neff notes, “With self-compassion, we give ourselves the same kindness and care we’d give to a good friend.”

## Kind Colleagues Week 2: Self-Kindness

**Be Kind to Your Body:** Being kind to our bodies by getting enough sleep, exercising regularly, and eating healthfully has a strong impact on our attention, mood, mindset, and ability to focus on our kindness practice. For instance, sleep deprivation negatively impacts our attention span, memory, cognitive functions, and overall quality of life.<sup>8</sup> Elsewhere, a Leeds Metropolitan University study shows that on days when employees exercised, they reported managing their time more effectively, being more productive, and having smoother interactions with their colleagues. They also went home feeling more satisfied at the end of the day.<sup>9</sup> We also know that when we eat nutritious meals and snacks during the workday, with an emphasis on fruits and vegetables, we boost our cognitive performance and make it easier to concentrate on completing necessary tasks.<sup>10</sup> 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. Ask staff to build mindfulness and self-awareness around being kind to their bodies by asking: How does your body feel after you get a good night's sleep/exercise/eat healthy food? What sensations do you notice? What are your mood and energy levels like as you go about the rest of your day? Why is it important to be kind to your body?



## Kind Colleagues Week 3: Kindness in Action: Everyday Practices

**Relaxation Techniques:** We all know how it feels when our thoughts race out of control—we feel overwhelmed, and it's easy to lose sight of our goals or the value we bring to our team. When we feel anxious or stressed, having a few go-to relaxation techniques is a kind way to create a sense of calm and focus that leads us back to productivity.



Video 1



Video 2



Video 3

**Breathing Exercise:** Use a tool such as video 1 or video 2 to lead you in breathing in and out deeply and mindfully. Feel the breath enter and leave your body and let the resulting sense of calm ground you and guide your thinking.

**Progressive Relaxation:** This is a simple technique that can be used to reduce stress and increase focus. Share video 3 with your team and discuss the importance of learning skills in order to calm ourselves and to focus.

Research suggests that doing exercises like these for ten minutes or more a day could reduce stress, reduce turnover intentions, improve social relationships, performance, and other positive outcomes for work and at home.<sup>11</sup>

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

**Kind Notes to Self:** To emphasize the importance of self-kindness, have staff write Kind Notes to themselves, recognizing something they like about themselves or a quality that makes them a kind person. As we know, Kind Notes are a small way we can make a big impact, and they can also have some great benefits to our health and mindset. These benefits extend to writing notes to ourselves as well! Have staff keep their Kind Notes nearby or display them in their workspace as a reminder of their kindness throughout the day. Some inspiring examples include: “You’re a good listener,” “It’s okay to relax and enjoy something that makes me happy,” and “The work you’re doing is important, and you’re making a positive impact.”



Kind Notes  
English · Spanish

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### Additional Activities

**Kind Leadership:** How we feel at work, and our connections with others, impacts our performance. Our prosocial nature as humans extends to the workplace environment, where kindness can be contagious, even though we might believe the workplace is for getting things done and not focusing on ourselves and our relationships. The research is clear that givers have even greater health and well-being benefits than receivers, meaning that being kind to others contributes to our own self-kindness practice.<sup>12</sup> Part of the work of encouraging self-kindness among employees extends to promoting social connections. According to Forbes, “Social connection provides a sense of cohesion in the office, which is essential for cultivating creativity, teamwork and collaboration.”<sup>13</sup> Leadership can support self-kindness and help employees form strong relationships by appreciating that “Workplace environment and policies need to communicate the value of social connections as well as put them into actionable practices and policies.”<sup>14</sup>

**Kindness at Home:** Encourage staff to practice one new healthy habit at home for a week, and to invite other members of their household to participate. They might try going to bed 15 minutes earlier each night, getting outside for 10–15 minutes or taking a family walk, or replacing one snack a day with a healthier option. At the end of the week, ask participants to share what it felt like to devote time towards being kind to their bodies. How did it feel physically? Did they notice any changes in their mood or in their ability to focus? Discuss how incorporating acts of self-kindness into our daily routines can benefit not only ourselves, but our entire households as we support each other in shared goals.

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