



Kind Colleagues Month 5: Gratitude for Kindness



Question of the Month

How do we show thanks for the kindness we receive and for the good things in our lives?

Kind Colleagues Week 1

Negativity Bias: Our brains are wired to focus acutely on events, details, and interactions of a negative character—signs of danger, risks in nature, physical and emotional pain, and/or social threats. This “negativity bias”¹ means that we notice and respond to negative stimuli more than we notice positive or even neutral stimuli in our lives. It’s hard-wired into the human experience to learn from painful episodes more immediately than we learn from pleasant events. And while this negativity bias can help us build determination and become more resilient, it can also limit our ability to express gratitude and appreciate the positive things in our lives. But the good news is that researchers have also found that we can perceive threats while still cultivating our potential to see the good in life.² Additionally, interpersonal relationships are strengthened and desired employee behaviors are more frequent when individuals purposefully cultivate feelings of gratitude.³ The more we understand how the brain functions, the more we understand how practicing gratitude and kindness can reshape our brains so that they perform better!

Kind Colleagues 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.⁴ 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. Staff can reflect on their kindness practice by considering the following: What does kindness mean to you? Why do you think kindness is important in your workplace? What is most difficult about kindness? Can you describe a time when you witnessed an act of kindness? Can you describe a time when a challenge was made easier by being addressed with kindness? Visiting the reasons behind our kindness practice will help to keep motivation strong, and answers can be revisited when looking for inspiration.



Kind Colleagues Week 3: Kindness in Action: Everyday Practices

Thank You Notes: Expressing gratitude by writing Thank You notes carries benefits for both the writer and the recipient. Psychotherapist Amy Morin explains that showing appreciation can help us to savor positive experiences, bolster self-esteem, and strengthen relationships, leading to new opportunities.⁵ Using Thank You Notes, or any format that works for your group, encourage employees, interns, volunteers, etc. to write notes to individuals or organizations that help make your workplace community a kind place. Deliver the notes at the end of the month and continue this activity throughout the year with different recipients.

To get started, it can be helpful to focus on these 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.)

Encourage your group to brainstorm different people or organizations to show gratitude for.



Thank You Notes
English · Spanish



Kind Colleagues Week 4: Kindness in Action: Everyday Practices

Kindness Coins: Kindness Coins are a tool to practice connecting with kindness, rather than an expected reward for kindness. Handmade by volunteers in our studios, they serve as helpful reminders to slow down, become aware of our emotions, and choose to practice intentional kindness. Encourage employees to look for opportunities to acknowledge kindness and practice gratitude, which builds connection and cohesion in the workplace. Begin by randomly passing out Kindness Coins. When employees see moments of kindness, they give away their coins as an acknowledgment. Visit our The Power of a Kindness Coin guide for additional ideas and information on their benefits. Learning about the power of recognizing kindness throughout the day, in whatever way possible, can benefit employees working remotely or who aren't able to hand out physical coins.



Additional Activities

Kind Leadership: Kindness and gratitude from leadership in the form of employee recognition holds an array of positive outcomes. According to *Harvard Business Review*, “Being recognized at work helps reduce employee burnout and absenteeism, and improves employee well-being...Receiving a compliment, words of recognition, and praise can help individuals feel more fulfilled, boost their self-esteem, improve their self-evaluations, and trigger positive emotions.”⁶ Consider beginning the custom of publicly recognizing kind staff members by honoring them with a Mini Ben’s Bell. Research cited in *Psychology Today* reveals the importance of public recognition specifically for employee engagement and satisfaction, showing employees were positively motivated by kudos from peers and acknowledgment from supervisors.⁷



Form a “Mini Bell” committee that will assess nominations and choose one staff member (or more) who will be celebrated for their kindness each month. Invite everyone to submit nominations. Each month, recognize the honoree at a staff meeting or other gathering, and share the award in your company newsletter. Share the kind words that were submitted about the recipient so that others can hear examples of kindness in their workplace.

Kindness at Home: Ask staff to reflect on what they’re grateful for in their homes, neighborhoods, and communities outside of the workplace. 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 they create a gratitude jar at home for anyone 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 what I’ve achieved,” 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 staff to share notes from their gratitude jar if they would like.



References

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