



Kind Colleagues Month 8: Kindness in our Community



Question of the Month

How can we help to spread kindness in our communities, and how does doing so benefit us in the workplace?

Kind Colleagues Week 1

Micro-moments of Connection: Humans experience the world as social creatures and rely on each other to survive and thrive. Knowing we're part of a larger community gives us a sense of belonging that in turn provides motivation to actively participate in behavior and activities that benefit the group, and therefore ourselves. It's easy to feel disconnected in our daily lives. One way we can feel more connected to our community is to focus on the small, yet meaningful, positive interactions that we have nearly every day. Training our brains to focus on what psychologist Barbara Frederickson calls "micro-moments" of connection changes the way our brain works and helps us feel deeply embedded in our families, schools, neighborhoods, and communities.¹ Frederickson explains that micro-moments develop an awareness of your surroundings, and even your sense of self. These micro-moments such as sharing a smile or expressing concern—improve emotional resilience, boost the immune system, and reduce susceptibility to depression and anxiety. Another study found that people's shared positive emotion over relatively short time periods (i.e., 15 seconds) was consistently associated with higher-quality interactions and relationships, both concurrently and over time.²

Bringing attention to our daily micro-moments helps us receive kindness from others, practice kindness toward ourselves, and share kindness every day.

Kind Colleagues Week 4: Kindness in Action: Everyday Practices

Volunteering as a Group: Having opportunities to volunteer through the workplace—sometimes called “company-sponsored volunteerism”—increases employee engagement, which in turn boosts productivity and performance at work. It can also increase job satisfaction as well as an employee’s emotional attachment to organizational values.⁶ Researchers have therefore referred to company-sponsored volunteerism as a “win-win-win.” Research suggests that the most organizationally beneficial volunteer opportunities are those that utilize the skill set of the volunteer, those that provide an opportunity for developing new skills, and those that are perceived by the volunteer as meaningful.⁷ Ask employees to suggest local groups or organizations that they admire, or come up with a list to choose from, such as an animal shelter, food pantry, children’s literacy group, or Ben’s Bells. Many organizations offer opportunities for virtual or in-person workplace volunteer groups.



Volunteer at Ben’s Bells

Additional Activities

Kind Leadership: An important part of kindness in our community is supporting local businesses and caring for the local environment. Keeping our dollars local is tied closely to community participation and support because “locally owned businesses create communities that are more prosperous, entrepreneurial, connected, and generally better off across a wide range of metrics.”⁸ When it comes to our health, there are links between “an economy of small-scale businesses and improved community well-being, including lower rates of crime and better public health.”⁹ Set an example by exploring options as an organization for supporting local businesses, considering vendors, lunchroom/meal orders, and employee gifts/perks. Keeping our dollars local is also better for the environment, as goods travel shorter distances and may require less packaging. Contributing to the local economy is a kind thing to do, and it is also an act of self-kindness to spend in ways that directly improve your own community.

Kindness at Home: Just as our kindness practice in the workplace can easily extend to the home, we can extend kind learning from our home to our neighborhood community as part of the ripple effect of kindness. Ask staff to reflect on what it means to be part of a kind community and brainstorm activities that promote kindness in their neighborhoods. Ideas may include picking up trash when they see it or organizing a pick-up event, smiling or waving at neighbors, participating in a neighborhood committee, or displaying visual reminders of kindness in their windows. Ask them how they would treat a neighborhood if they felt it was kind, and to consider what it feels like to contribute to a shared space that is kind. Invite staff to share their experiences.

References

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