

# 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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 2: Self-Kindness

Just Like My Friend: We can easily be hard on ourselves—we're often self-critical without even realizing it. Professor Brené Brown reminds us in these instances to, "Talk to yourself like you would someone you love." This is an important component of self-kindness as the words we speak to ourselves guide our emotions and actions. This month, try talking to yourself with the kindness and gentleness you'd show to a person you treasure. When you notice self-critical thoughts, try using a "Just like \_\_\_\_" statement. Think of someone in your life for whom you have great compassion. It could be your partner, a colleague, a friend, or anyone who brings out your kindest self. Put that person's name in the blank to try to find the same kindness for yourself: "Just like \_\_\_\_, I am trying my best." Or "Just like \_\_\_\_, I make mistakes." Or "Just like \_\_\_\_, I am learning about life." We don't expect perfection from those we love, but we often expect it from ourselves. Thinking about how we'd respond to a friend in our situation can help us reframe experiences to cultivate self-compassion and show kindness to ourselves.



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



**Spread Kindness in Your Community:** People tend to underestimate the impact that acts of kindness may have on others, leading them to engage in prosocial actions less often in everyday life.<sup>3</sup> However, research shows that one act of kindness can create a ripple effect that goes on to impact and inspire entire communities,<sup>4</sup> which is great motivation for modeling kind behavior. Dr. Haesung Jung describes kind and helpful behaviors as "quite contagious" and explains that "we need a social environment where prosocial behavior is positively reinforced in order for people to imitate that behavior more."<sup>5</sup> Explore ways your organization can publicly share your commitment to the practice of kindness in order to motivate your community. Consider sharing the "be kind" message on a marquee, on your building, or with a yard sign. Inspire your customers and social media followers with posts about your progress. Additionally, you can create a strong visual statement by continuing to participate in the Be Kind Challenge and tracking acts of kindness with paper chains, which can be done at the office or at home. Sharing your progress will motivate others and help set the tone for the power we all have to create a kind environment.

## 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.<sup>6</sup> Researchers have therefore referred to company-sponsored volunteerism as a "win-winwin." 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.<sup>7</sup> 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."<sup>8</sup> 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."<sup>9</sup> 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

1. Fredrickson, B.L. (2013). Love 2.0: How Our Supreme Emotion Affects Everything We Feel, Think, Do, and Become. Avery. 2. Chen, K.-H. et al. (2021). "Physiological linkage during shared positive and shared negative emotion." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 121(5), 1029–1056. https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000337 3. Kumar, A., & Epley, N. (2022). "A little good goes an unexpectedly long way: Underestimating the positive impact of kindness on recipients." Journal of Experimental Psychology: General. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1037/xge0001271 4. Jung, H. et al (2020). "Prosocial modeling: A meta-analytic review and synthesis." Psychological Bulletin, 146(8), 635–663. https://doi.org/10.1037/ bul000235. 5. Suttie, J. (2020, Nov 18). How Kindness Spreads in a Community. Greater Good Magazine. https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how\_kindness\_preads\_in\_a\_ community. 6. Haski-Leventhal, D., Kach, A., & Pournader, M. (2019). "Employee Need Satisfaction and Positive Workplace Outcomes: The Role of Corporate Volunteering." Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 48(3), 593–615. https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764019829829. 7. Caligiuri, P., Mencin, A., & Jiang, K. (2013). "Win–Win–Win: The Influence of Company-Sponsored Volunteering Programs on Employees, NGOs, and Business Units." Personnel Psychology, Volume66, Issue4, https://doi. org/10.1111/pps.12019.8. Mitchell, S. (2016, 8 Jan). Key Studies: Why Independent Matters. Institute for Local Self-Reliance. https://list.org/key-studies-why-local-matters/. 9. Blanchard, T. C, Tolbert, C, & Mencken, C. (2012). "The health and wealth of US counties: how the small business environment impacts alternative measures of development." Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society, Volume 5, Issue 1, https://doi.007/01.0073/cjres/rs034

