



## Kind Colleagues Month 11: Kindness and Happiness



### Question of the Month

How are kindness and happiness related?

### Kind Colleagues Week 1

**Involvement vs. Independence:** Humans have simultaneous needs for involvement and independence. We need to be recognized and valued as individuals within our workplaces, families, and friend circles. Yet at the same time, we need to be acknowledged as full members of our communities. One study discusses how “support for employees’ basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness” increases motivation, and how a focus on these needs leads to “achieving goals from talent retention to workplace wellness.”<sup>1</sup> The challenge at work is to help staff members understand our dueling needs for involvement and independence, and then to help build self-awareness around accurately identifying which need takes priority, and when. The goal is to create a workplace environment in which colleagues can pursue and attain well-being, psychological growth, and integrity. To support staff development, work together to build awareness of others, so that people begin to notice involvement/independence needs in colleagues. There should also be ample opportunity for interaction and collaboration. Understanding this part of the human condition provides opportunities for staff to work together around kindness practices that notice and acknowledge individuals, while building strong social connections together as a work community.

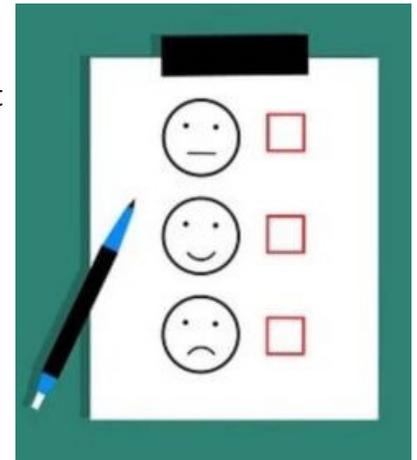
## Kind Colleagues Week 2: Self-Kindness

**Benefits of Laughter:** The Mayo Clinic confirms there are many health benefits from laughter, including decreased blood pressure, reduced stress hormone levels, toned abdominal muscles, improved cardiac health, increased endorphins, and an improved sense of general well-being.<sup>2</sup> Elsewhere, researchers notes that “Humor can be a powerful form of communication in organizations, leading to positive emotions and cognitions, high-quality interactions, and enhanced managerial and business unit performance.”<sup>3</sup> While it’s not healthy to ignore negative emotions, finding the right place for humor and laughter in our lives carries physical and cognitive benefits, and “possessing a sense of humor also helps people remain resilient in the face of adverse circumstances” says Professor George Bonanno.<sup>4</sup> Mary Laskin, a nurse, suggests that we “treat humor as a discipline—like physical exercise—that [we] set aside time for on a daily basis.”<sup>4</sup> Ask colleagues to share links to their favorite funny videos so everyone can watch and experience the benefits of a good belly laugh. Giving yourself the time to let loose and laugh is great self-care!



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

**Open Attitude Towards All Emotions:** “Happiness has increasingly been thought to be more about getting little infusions of pleasure, about feeling good rather than being good, less about living the well-lived life than about experiencing the well-felt moment,”<sup>5</sup> says Darrin McMahon, PhD. Because of our belief that we need to feel good in order to be happy, we may feel despair when sad feelings arise. But resisting sad feelings actually may cause suffering, while being open to the experience of sadness may lead to compassion. Practice being open to your own sadness and to the sadness of others without trying to “fix” the feeling. When colleagues experience a difficult situation or a loss, instead of trying to cheer them up, offer to sit and listen to them. Visit this article by Jeannette Maré about embracing sadness as your staff practices kindness this month.



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

**Give it Up:** One obstacle to long-term happiness is that the happiness we find in enjoyable things tends to fade. Researchers have found that temporarily giving up something that brings us pleasure can actually increase our happiness in the long run.<sup>6</sup> It can help foster a more positive state of mind, and it encourages us to appreciate and savor the happiness of that pleasure when we return to it.

Try this exercise for one week:

1. Choose something that you enjoy (such as eating sweets or scrolling social media).
2. On the first day, enjoy as much of the item/activity as you would like.
3. For the next six days, refrain from consuming or using the thing you enjoy.
4. On day seven, enjoy the item again as you wish, making sure to notice and savor the experience of how you feel, both physically and emotionally. How has this brief exercise changed your state of mind?

According to the Greater Good Science Center, “Giving something up and then coming back to it later can build anticipation and make the experience feel more novel and exciting. It can also make people more likely to focus on and savor the pleasurable aspects of the experience rather than giving in to distractions.”<sup>7</sup>



## Additional Activities

### Kind Leadership

We may think that work isn't the place for building social relationships, but a wealth of research supports the value of workplace friendships and the role leadership can play in encouraging them. According to Forbes, "Employees with friends or social connections at work tend to be more engaged and loyal workers. This is because quality work relationships help build a strong company culture that emphasizes respect, loyalty and trust."<sup>8</sup> Friends communicate with kindness and encourage each other. Additionally, "Gallup data indicate that having a best friend at work is strongly linked to business outcomes, including profitability, safety, inventory control and retention."<sup>9</sup> Leaders wishing to increase workplace happiness should discuss the importance of friendships openly and provide opportunities for employees to have social experiences, including across teams. Consider how time spent building a culture where staff feel happy, connected, and appreciated is a valuable part of our kindness practice.

### Kindness at Home

Our friendships help us build our kind community, bringing relationships that can contribute significantly to our happiness. 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>10</sup> Having strong social relationships can be beneficial to an individual's health and can actually increase longevity.<sup>11</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>12</sup> Who have you turned to when needing connection, support, or a good laugh? Send a note of thanks to your kind friends today!



## References

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