



Kind Colleagues Month 12: Commit to Kindness



Question of the Month

How can we maintain a daily kindness practice? Why should kindness be a habit?

Kind Colleagues Week 1

Kindness and Trust: Researchers at MIT note that “Creating a great employee experience is critical to enable work that creates value in the digital era...companies with great employee experience outperform competitors on innovation, customer satisfaction, and profitability.”¹ Creating a kind organizational culture is an important investment in the success of individual staff members and your organization’s bottom line. Additionally, neuroscience research on trust confirms that building a kind culture will help build lasting connections that lead to improved outcomes. Professor Paul J. Zak’s studies on neuroscience and trust reveal: “Employees in high-trust organizations are more productive, have more energy at work, collaborate better with their colleagues, and stay with their employers longer than people working at low-trust companies. They also suffer less chronic stress and are happier with their lives, and these factors fuel stronger performance.”² Spending time to infuse kindness and trust into your workplace culture will not only make your employees kinder to themselves and others, it will increase loyalty, too.

Kind Colleagues Week 2: Self-Kindness

Manage Attention, Not Time: We often feel overwhelmed by everything that competes for our attention—meetings, emails, budgets, spreadsheets, presentations, and more. While we can't slow down the clock, we can practice self-kindness and intentionality to manage our attention. We may think we're mismanaging our time when in fact we're letting our attention drift or trying to multitask too many things at once.³ Organizational psychologist Adam Grant notes that "attention management is the art of focusing on getting things done for the right reasons, in the right places and at the right moments" and suggests being thoughtful about the timing of our distractions.⁴ Practice self-kindness by focusing on understanding individual distractions, noticing when you get your best work done, and setting priorities that help you focus effectively. Asking questions, such as "Is this the best use of my energy?" or "Is this the time of day when I get my best work done?" will help your workplace develop an intentional environment in which self-kindness helps colleagues feel supported and able to succeed.



Kind Colleagues Week 3: Kindness in Action: Everyday Practices

Reflecting on Kindness: Take the time to think about why the practice of kindness is important to you personally and to your organization. Revisiting the reasons behind the practice of kindness will help to keep motivation strong. Consider the following questions and write down the answers in a notebook so that they have a chance to sink in:

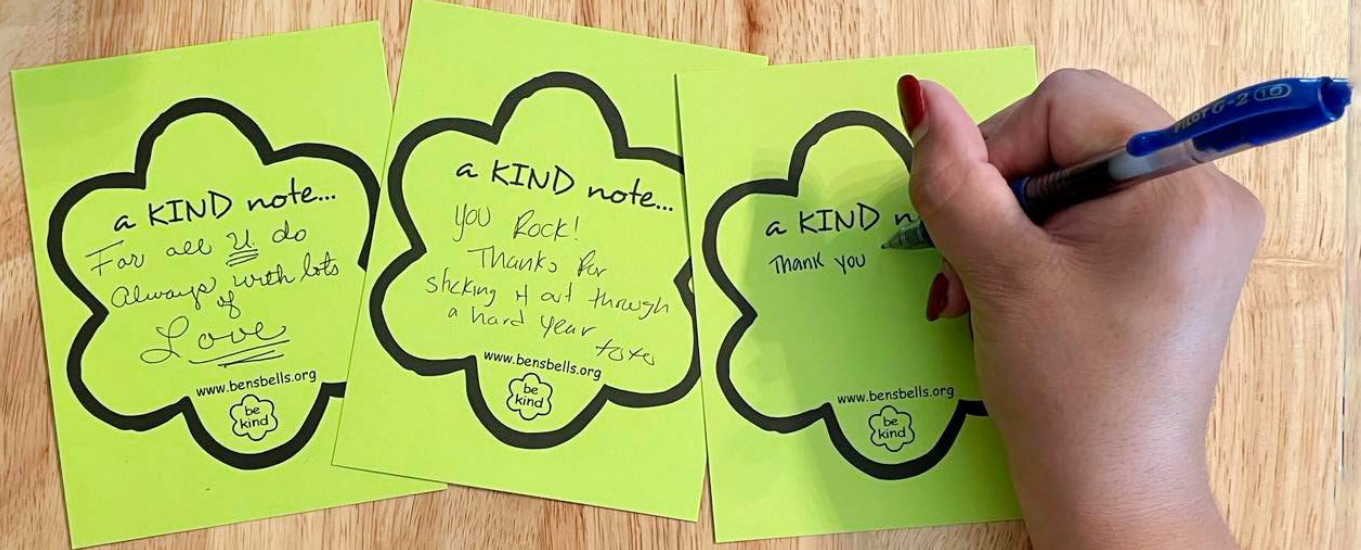
1. What does kindness mean to you?
2. Why do you think kindness is important in your workplace?
3. How has your understanding of kindness changed over the past few months of participating in Kind Colleagues?
4. What is most difficult about kindness?
5. Can you describe a time when you witnessed an act of kindness at work?
6. Can you describe a time when someone was kind to you, and it made a difference in your day?
7. What does it mean to commit to kindness?

Return to your answers as often as needed when you're taking a break from your workday, pausing during a stressful situation, or looking for inspiration.



Kind Colleagues Week 4: Kindness in Action: Everyday Practices

Community Gratitude and Support: Do you know an individual, group, or organization that makes your community a kinder place, or who could use some support? Thank or acknowledge your kind community by having staff write Kind Notes to deliver. This may include someone who gave a useful presentation, a business you partnered with, or an organization that is going through a challenge. Discuss how receiving Kind Notes will make the recipient(s) feel and how it might inspire kind behavior. How does this impact us all? Select 2-3 recipients every few weeks and ask all employees to write Kind Notes to be delivered as a surprise. Consistently recognizing and supporting your kind community is a great way to keep your practice active as a group, and to share stories of kindness among employees.



Additional Activities

Kind Leadership

In order for individuals to act kindly in the workplace, they need to be supported by systems and policies that allow them to do so. Otherwise, people won't be able to enact their own intentions and skills to do kindness. One example comes in the form of acknowledgement of work/life balance coming from leadership. When we go all out day after day, our stress hormones will regularly surge, causing possible stress-related problems. Working too many hours can negatively impact our health by escalating stress and preventing us from good habits like eating healthfully, prioritizing downtime, and exercising regularly.⁵ The American Institute of Stress notes that we all handle stress differently, and that "it is not the job but the person-environment fit that matters."⁶ Research is clear that resisting the urge to overwork will yield positive health benefits, and that this effort can be supported in the workplace. Encourage employees to take some time each day to put down technology, be calm, and reset. Employers can help in this process by providing places to take a break, refocus, and relax, and by encouraging employees to use them.

Kindness at Home

Remind employees that one of the outcomes of kindness in the workplace is that kind intentions and behaviors can extend to the home, and even spread to entire communities. It's valuable to practice kindness in and across the various spaces that we're a part of. Building healthy habits can be accomplished by starting small and being consistent; it can take time to establish a regular habit, but there are small things we can do each day.⁷ Encourage staff to commit to daily small kindness practices at home that they feel they can stick to, which will help to make kindness at home a regular part of their lives.



References

1. Dery, K. & Sebastian, I.M. (2017, Jun 15). Building Business Value With Employee Experience. MIT Center for Information Systems Research. https://cisr.mit.edu/publication/2017_0601_EmployeeExperience_DerySebastian. 2. Zak, P.J. (Jan-Feb 2017). The Neuroscience of Trust. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2017/01/the-neuroscience-of-trust>. 3. Hunter, J. (2020, Jun 7). The Essential Resource We're All Wasting. Mindful. <https://www.mindful.org/essential-resource-wasting/>. 4. Grant, A. (2019, Mar 28). Productivity Isn't About Time Management. It's About Attention Management. New York Times <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/28/smarter-living/productivity-isnt-about-time-management-its-about-attention-management.html>. 5. Skerrett, P.J. (2009, Oct 27). Don't Overwork Your Brain. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2009/10/dont-overwork-your-brain>. 6. The American Institute of Stress, <https://www.stress.org/workplace-stress>. 7. Parker-Pope, T. (2021, Jun 7). How to Build Healthy Habits. New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/18/well/mind/how-to-build-healthy-habits.html>.