



## Kind Campus Month 5: Allowing Time for Kindness

### Question of the Month

Why should we make time to practice kindness? What will happen if we make time regularly?

### Kind Campus Week 1

**Kindness Requires Skill:** In order to make kindness part of our daily lives, it's important to remember that kindness can require skill, and that, like all skills, it takes practice and upkeep. Allowing ourselves the time to do this work means keeping kindness front of mind so that it becomes a natural part of our everyday lives and environment. Dr. Lauren C. Howe notes that, "People may believe that their weaknesses will be lost over time, but that their strengths are there to stay. Because of this, we might not be very motivated to work on our strengths. Imagine a person who feels that they are a particularly kind person, and that this will never change. They might not take the time to cultivate kindness even further—for instance, to go out of their way to volunteer or help other people. Perhaps this person would instead let these habits slide, and—secure in their "kindness"—would actually become less kind over time. If we don't actively engage with our strengths, we might see them fade.<sup>1"</sup> As kindness becomes one of our strengths, the benefits and impact are a continuing journey rather than a finite set of expertise. Remind students that kindness is not always easy; it takes practice, and that's OK!

## Kind Campus Week 2: Self-Kindness

**Benefits of Taking Breaks:** In addition to being kind to our minds and bodies, a short break can also improve productivity. This may seem counterintuitive — it may never feel as though there’s enough time to take a break, or that it will slow your momentum. But research indicates that when we focus on a single task for a prolonged period of time, our attention naturally wanders. Taking a break and then returning to the task, also called “goal reactivation,” improves our focus, attention, and performance, and allows us to engage in sustained mental efforts.<sup>2</sup>

**Activity: Stretching and Breathing:** This is a simple exercise that can help students build awareness of their thoughts and how they affect their bodies. This activity works well as a 5-10 minute break in class and may help students reduce stress and increase focus. Talk with students about why it’s important for us to learn skills to calm ourselves and focus. Then lead the activity by following [this script](#).



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

**Mindful Listening:** Careful listening is difficult, but we can develop mindful listening skills with simple practice. Mindful listening asks us to be in the present moment and focus on what the other person is saying rather than being quick to offer our own take or letting our minds wander to something else. Dr. Elizabeth Dorrance Hall recommends “showing interest and support through maintaining eye contact, nodding, smiling, and encouraging [the speaker] to express their thoughts” as well as “giv[ing] others the space to share without interrupting, advising, or correcting them.”<sup>3</sup> One study found that “high-quality (i.e., empathic, attentive, and nonjudgmental) listening reduces speakers’ social anxiety and leads them to delve deeper into greater self-awareness,<sup>4</sup>” leading to more open-minded conversations. Focusing on how we listen contributes to healthier and more constructive communication and is a valuable part of our kindness practice.

Have students pair up with the goal of mindful listening. Each student talks for two minutes about their day or an important experience while their partner listens without interruption or judgment. At the end of the two minutes, the listening partner describes what they heard. Switch roles and repeat. Have students reflect on the importance of listening respectfully to their friends, family, and peers.



## Kind Campus 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. The best rewards for kindness are intrinsic. Each coin comes with a tag that states, in English and Spanish, “This is a Ben’s Bells Kindness Coin. Keep it as a reminder to practice kindness or share the kindness and pass it on.” Kindness Coins serve as helpful reminders to slow down, become aware of our emotions, and practice intentional kindness.

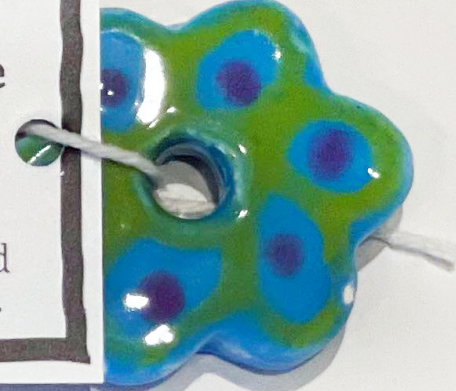
Introduce Kindness Coins to your school as a mission for your students, staff, and faculty to seek and find kindness. Begin by randomly passing out Kindness Coins from our [Shop](#), or small tokens that students have made on their own. When participants see moments of kindness—or want to practice gratitude—they pass along their Kindness Coins. Visit our [The Power of a Kindness Coin](#) guide for activity ideas, info on the science and benefits of kindness, and more. Ask students to reflect each day by sharing examples of giving out their tokens and how it made them feel.





This is a Ben's Bells kindness coin. Keep it as a reminder to practice kindness or share the kindness and pass it on.

Esta es una moneda de amabilidad de Ben's Bells. Guárdelo como un recordatorio para practicar la amabilidad o comparte la amabilidad y transmítelo.



## Additional Activities

**Assuming Good Intentions:** Talk about what it means to assume someone has good intentions. There are times when others may hurt us physically or emotionally without intending to. But when we assume that someone has good intentions, we encourage empathy and a generous spirit, and we create opportunities for others to apologize or rephrase something with kindness. Leading questions help facilitate positive discussions, such as: Did that student cut me off in the lunch line just to make me frustrated? Did my friend ignore me to make me feel sad?

Break students into small groups and choose several Assuming Good Intentions Dilemmas. Urge students to pay attention to their initial reactions, which may not take into account the other person's intention. Instead, encourage students to consider how their responses might change if they assume the best intentions of others.

## Kindness at Home

It can be difficult to find the time to practice kindness at home so that it becomes a part of our daily lives. Try finding a time when family members are together, such as the commute to/from school or mealtime, and ask each person to share a kind act they did or witnessed. This short activity done at the same time each day can become an enjoyable part of the routine at home, and can create connections through sharing and reflection. Or, suggest students create a gratitude jar at home where anyone can write down something they're grateful for at any time. Watch the jar fill with slips of paper and come together whenever convenient to read a few notes of gratitude.

## References

1. Howe, L.C. (2016, May 24). A Self-Improvement Secret: Work on Strengths. *Scientific American*. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-self-improvement-secret-work-on-strengths/>.
2. Ariga, A., & Lleras, A. (2011). "Brief and rare mental 'breaks' keep you focused: Deactivation and reactivation of task goals preempt vigilance decrements." *Cognition*, 118(3), 439–443. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21211793/>.
3. Hall, E.D. (2017, Mar 31). Mindful Listening: Using empathy to listen instead of offering advice. *Psychology Today*. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/conscious-communication/201703/mindful-listening>.
4. Itzchakov, G. (2018). "The Listener Sets the Tone: High-Quality Listening Increases Attitude Clarity and Behavior-Intention Consequences." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Vol 44, Issue 5. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0146167217747874>.



### Discussion

Talk about what it means to assume someone has good intentions. There are times when others may hurt us physically or emotionally without intending to. But when we assume that someone has good intentions, we encourage empathy and a generous spirit, and we create opportunities for others to apologize or rephrase something with kindness. Leading questions help facilitate positive discussions, such as: Did that student cut me off in the lunch line just to make me frustrated? Did my friend ignore me to make me feel sad?

### Assuming Good Intentions

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1. On Monday morning while Janie was walking to her classroom, Steve, a classmate, bumped into her. Janie dropped her books on the ground and Steve did not stop to help her pick them up.
2. Nate and Juan were on their way to soccer practice. Juan's mom was in charge of the carpool that day, so they were riding with her. While she was driving, Juan's mom slammed on her brakes, yelled out "Hey!" and raised her hand at another car that cut in front of her.
3. Every day at lunch, Keisha and Gabby sat together and then play on the swings during recess. Today, Keisha sat down next to Gabby, who was silently eating her lunch. Keisha talked to her like she usually does, but Gabby ignored Keisha. During recess, Gabby wouldn't play on the swings, and instead sat quietly on a bench.
4. Marco's family went out to dinner on Friday night at a popular restaurant. Once they were seated, they had to wait a very long time for the server to come to their table. When the server arrived, he took their orders quickly and didn't even ask them what they wanted to drink. It took almost an hour for the food to arrive at their table, and Marco's order was wrong.
5. Natalie was so excited to wear the new jeans they got for their birthday. When they arrived at school, they were showing them off to the rest of their classmates. One classmate, Mariah, said they looked silly and that she didn't like them.
6. Mr. Encinar's 4th grade class went on a field trip to have a picnic at the local park. During their lunch, Raymond and Claire noticed someone walking their dog along the path. When they bent down to pet the dog, they dropped some papers out of their bag. They continued walking without stopping to pick them up.
7. Isiah and Brandon both tried out for the school basketball team. Brandon was so excited when he saw his name on the list of students who made the team! He had worked hard all summer practicing his skills. Isiah did not make the team. When Brandon came up to him and said how excited he was to play basketball this year, Isiah said he only made the team because Brandon is taller than him.
8. One school trip, Shanna won't stop talking. She has the "right" answer to every question, and she tries to tell all the other students what to do. Lysette gets along well with Shanna at school, and she feels confused because Shanna is acting like a different person on this trip.
9. Marcus and Esther are members of a student club that volunteers to pick up litter on the side of the road on the weekend. On Saturday, when they are cleaning up, someone yells at them from a passing car, but they can't understand what was said.

Assuming Good Intentions Dilemmas  
[Elementary](#) | [Middle & High](#)

