



Kind Campus Month 9: Celebrate Your Kind Community

Question of the Month

How can we become more aware of kindness in our community so we can experience all of its benefits?

Kind Campus Week 1

Being Kind in Response to Unkind Behavior: It's not always easy to be kind, and it's particularly challenging when someone is unkind to us. Our tendency is to mirror the emotions, feelings, and mood of that person. This is called "complementary behavior" and it's the behavior we expect. When someone is warm to us, we're warm in return. Likewise, if someone is rude, dismissive, or hurtful, our tendency is to react with similar disrespect. However, we can choose to act with intentional kindness when someone has been unkind or inappropriate. Stop, take a breath, and think about the kind way to respond. We might choose to be kind to ourselves and walk away from the situation, especially if speaking up feels too hard or not safe. Or, we may choose to calmly let the other person know their behavior is hurtful. We may ask a trusted adult for help. When we're regularly practicing our kindness skills and feel good about ourselves, we can prioritize kind responses to unkind behavior, even if that means putting ourselves first. It can be an act of self-kindness to decline to mirror negative behaviors. Have a conversation with students sharing ideas around the prompt.

"What does kindness look like when someone is unkind to you?"

Kind Campus Week 2: Self-Kindness

The Benefits of Music: We know from experience that music has a substantial emotional component. It may evoke strong memories or nostalgia, make us feel connected to a group of people, or get us excited for an event. Music activates pleasure centers in the brain, which helps to explain why all human cultures place high societal value on music.² Studies also show that highly empathic people tend to find music listening more pleasurable,³ and that music-making can facilitate prosocial behavior in preschoolers such as sharing and helping.⁴ Listening to music that you enjoy is a great way to be kind to yourself and experience benefits such as a boost in positive mood, reduced stress and anxiety, better sleep, and increased motivation. It may even improve immune functioning⁵ and is a great way to learn about other cultures across the globe. Explore new music or put on old favorites often as part of your kindness practice.



Kind Campus Week 3: Kindness in Action: Everyday Practices

Changing Behavior Patterns: Talk with students about how difficult it is to change habits. The first step is identifying that we need to make a change. Then we must recognize that we have the ability to change our behavior by building self-awareness. Have students make a list of three strengths they are proud of, and three difficulties that they face when practicing kindness. How did they work to overcome these challenges? Ask students to share items from either list with the class. This self-reflective exercise helps students gain insight into their own lives as well as the lives of their fellow students. Discuss innovative ways of changing behavior so that students can respond with kindness (conscious brain), rather than react with defensiveness (unconscious brain) when facing something new or challenging. Considering the different options we have in life helps students think about building self-awareness, which empowers us to make choices that are kind to ourselves. It also helps us change behavior, so it's kind to others too.



Kind Campus Week 4: Kindness in Action: Everyday Practices



Kindness to Plants: Plants, just like animals and humans, are an important part of our community. Explore what plants provide us, and what we can do to care for them. Have students work in groups or pairs and choose an established plant on campus, or plant something new at home, to monitor and document changes. As students look for growth, new buds, and color, they provide care to help keep their plant healthy and growing, keeping in mind pruning, watering, or other needs.



Kindness to Animals: Brainstorm ways that students, staff, and faculty can be kind to the creatures in your community. Discuss topics like the responsibility of having a pet, and the benefits of actions such as spaying/neutering pets, reporting unkind behavior to animals, respecting animal habitats, and learning about native species. Encourage students to talk with peers and adults about how caring for the Earth means creating a kind community for its creatures.



Kindness to the Environment: List ways that your school can be kind to the Earth by improving the environment in your community. Discuss why a diverse local ecosystem helps us all thrive and how preserving a safe environment for many species is an act of kindness. Gather ideas and then commit to improving your community's environment this month. Some ideas might include a food-and-supply drive for your local animal shelter, collecting recyclables, or thinking of ways to create less waste.



Additional Activities

Kind Campus Certificate

Celebrate your students with a [Kind Campus Certificate](#). These colorful certificates remind students that they were part of building a kind culture on your campus this year.

Kindness at Home

Kind Summer: Have students come up with a short list of goals for their kind summer. Ask them to consider why it's important to keep their practice active, and what they'd like to bring back to campus with them for the next school year. Kind activities at home over the break may include: helping out more at home, trying a new hobby, caring for a space in their neighborhood, connecting with someone new, getting enough sleep/exercise, creating kind art, or simply savoring their "me" time. We hope students feel refreshed and ready to practice kindness on campus and at home next year!



References

1. Hopwood, C.J. (2016, Jul 16). *Don't Do What I Do: How Getting Out Of Sync Can Help Relationships*. NPR. <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2016/07/16/485721853/dont-do-what-i-do-how-getting-out-of-sync-can-help-relationships>.
2. Salimpoor, V.N. et al (2011). "Anatomically distinct dopamine release during anticipation and experience of peak emotion to music." *Nature Neuroscience* 14, 257-262 <https://doi.org/10.1038/nn.2726>.
3. Wallmark, Z., Deblieck, C., & Iacoboni, M. (2018). "Neurophysiological Effects of Trait Empathy in Music Listening." *Frontiers in Behavioral Neuroscience* <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnbeh.2018.00066>.
4. Beck, S.L. & Rieser, J. (2020). "Non-random acts of kindness: Joint music making increases preschoolers' helping and sharing with an adult." *Psychology of Music Vol 50, Issue 1, 2022* <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735620978688>.
5. Chanda, M.L. & Daniel J. Levitin, D.J. (2013). "The neurochemistry of music." *Trends in Cognitive Sciences Volume 17, Issue 4, Pages 179-193* <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2013.02.007>.