



## Month 4: Helping Behaviors

Helping behaviors, such as assisting someone with a task, skill-sharing, or volunteering our time communicate mutual support. Helping, sharing, and noticing the needs of one another makes people feel cared for and encourages us to act as a community.<sup>1</sup>

### Week 1: Ready for Kindness

**Noticing When Others Need Help:** Psychologist Tara Cousineau notes that “Kindness is not random. We have to intentionally redirect our energy and attention to noticing what is good, pleasant and beautiful about humanity.”<sup>2</sup> Noticing when others need help is an important form of awareness that highlights our roles as social creatures and allows us to cultivate empathy. Ask students to share an example of the last time someone helped them without being asked. What was the outcome? The more we practice considering the needs of others, the more we can respond with helping behaviors that communicate kindness and support.



### Week 2: Kindness Influencers

**Modeling Helping Behaviors:** When people jump in to help each other, their behavior influences those around them. Ask students to consider how it would make them feel to see a classmate sit with someone who is alone at lunch, help someone gather up papers they've dropped, hold a door open for someone, or put things away at the end of an activity. Sharing resources is another helping behavior that showcases awareness of others and highlights the difference that one person or small group can make. When students observe others helping, whether it be fellow students or adults on campus, it strengthens the understanding that supporting others is crucial for the well-being of the community.

Helping behaviors reflect expectations in a space such as fairness, kindness, and justice. Brainstorm with students forms of helping behaviors they could engage in on campus that would motivate others to join them in their kindness.



### Week 3: Skills for Kindness

**Bracelet Exercise:** Encourage students to wear a bracelet or rubber band around their wrist and participate in an experiment that strengthens their emotional awareness. Talk about the idea of building awareness around their thoughts and emotions by pausing to notice, rather than reacting without thinking. When we feel challenged or frustrated, we're in reactive mode and it can be hard for us to be kind. Challenge students to notice when their brain reacts impulsively; when it does, have them move their bracelet to the other wrist. For instance, students might want to focus on reactions to frustration during class, self-critical thoughts, or reactions to negative social media posts. The goal of this exercise is to empower students to become more mindful and to build self-awareness. As students notice their reactions, they learn to pause and consider before potentially choosing to respond with kindness. The bracelet exercise is also a great tool for bringing focus to the good by moving the bracelet when we notice kind acts or positive experiences.



### Week 4: Self-Kindness:

**Asking for Help:** Asking for help when we need it, in the classroom or in other areas of our lives, is a kind way to treat ourselves when we're overwhelmed or facing difficulties with a project. It requires vulnerability to admit we need help, but rather than thinking we're burdening the other person, we might instead frame it as an opportunity to collaborate, share ideas, and ultimately boost happiness in our helper.<sup>3</sup> We can see it as an invitation for them to practice kindness towards us. Ask students to write down an example of the last time they helped someone. How did it make them feel? Next, have students write down an example of the last time they asked for help. What was the response? If positive, how did receiving the help make them feel? Creating an environment where students feel comfortable asking for help cultivates a sense of belonging that ultimately affects if and how students speak up when they have a need.<sup>4</sup>

### Helping Behaviors:

- Noticing when someone needs help and doing something
- Sharing resources with each other or helping to find the resources others need
- Noticing when people look lost and helping them get to their destination
- Responding to each other's needs quickly
- Asking for help when you need it
- Gathering items for donation in the community



**References:** 1. Maré, J.L. (2023). "Kindness In Hospitals: A Mixed-Methods Reasoned Action Approach To Understanding Prosocial Communication In Healthcare" <https://tinyurl.com/thhsm29h> 2. Cousineau, T. (2018) *The Kindness Cure: How the Science of Compassion Can Heal Your Heart and Your World*. New Harbinger Publications. Oakland, CA. 3. Greater Good Science Center (2018). Ask for Help at Work. Greater Good in Action. Retrieved from [https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/ask\\_for\\_help\\_at\\_work](https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/ask_for_help_at_work). 4. Won, S., Hensley, L.C., & Wolters, C.A. (2019). "Sense of Belonging and Academic Help-Seeking as Self-Regulated Learning." *The Journal of Experimental Education* Volume 89, 2021-Issue 1 Pages 112-124 <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220973.2019.1703095>