

Acts of Kindness

There are several ways in which educators can support kindness between students. Shankland & Rosset (2017) describe two. First, educators can provide students with sticky notes to write kind things about another person. Then, students are tasked with secretly delivering or posting the note so the intended person receives it. Second and in the spirit of secret santas, students are secretly assigned a peer to serve for a month. When students develop kindness, they are more inclusive and well-liked by their peers and bullying decreases (Layous et al., 2012).

Grade Level:	All
Materials:	Paper, writing utensil, other materials as needed.
Duration:	Encourage students to perform 5 acts of kindness one day/ week. Repeat for a few weeks, as desired.
Implementation:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Create a recipient bank: Help students determine a list of family members, friends, or organizations they would like to help. You can also assign students to serve one of their peers.2. Plan acts of kindness: Help students develop a plan of what acts of kindness they want to perform during the week3. Verify student plans: Make sure students' plans are appropriate, feasible, and safe.4. Create a timeline and complete the acts.5. Have students reflect upon acts of kindness experience.

Does it work?

In a four week kindness intervention for children ages 9-11, Layous and colleagues (2012) discovered that students who performed three acts of kindness each week were happier and reported greater life satisfaction. Additionally, these students were found to be more accepted by their peers and exhibited more inclusive behaviors (Layous et al., 2012). Lyubomirsky and colleagues (2005) discovered that acts of kindness were more effective at improving wellbeing and prosocial behavior when performed within the same day, rather than over the course of a week or month. They argue that having students complete the activities within a small timeframe will help them better recognize the impact and importance of kindness.

In a recent study in the Netherlands assessed the impact of a four-week acts of kindness intervention on the mental and social wellbeing of university students (Wieners et al., 2021). Given that acts of kindness performed in the same day are more effective at improving wellbeing (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005), the university students were asked to pick one day a week to perform five acts of kindness. This study found that performing acts of kindness for close friends and family members led to significant improvement in wellbeing, whereas performing acts of kindness for strangers was linked to improvements in emotional and psychological wellbeing (Wieners et al., 2021).

References:

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