

Make kindness your “default setting”



You never really know what others are dealing with. Even if someone seems to have a sunny demeanor, behind their smile they may be going through a lot that you don't see, especially in today's busy and complicated world. Making kindness your “default setting” helps others around you—and it can help you, too. Studies show that kindness releases mood-lifting brain chemicals that help lower stress, create emotional warmth, increase self-esteem, protect your heart, improve health outcomes, and may even help you live longer and be more successful! Maximize the benefits of kindness by making it a habit. Try these small but meaningful ideas.

Just smile. Smiling releases feel-good brain chemicals—plus, it's contagious! People have a built-in response to copy facial expressions, so you'll likely get plenty of smiles back!

Regularly acknowledge and thank people. Be the reason someone has a great day at work! Too often, people get more complaints than they get thanks. Mention to people like the doctor's office staff, the customer service rep on the phone, and the cashier at the store how you appreciate their service and attention. It might truly make their day!

Ask others how they're doing—and then listen. Look for opportunities to reach out to others. Simply listening to someone costs nothing, but it can really help them understand they're cared about.

Take the high road when interacting with those you dislike or disagree with. Remember that there is more to them than just the traits you dislike. Try acknowledging something they do well and giving them a sincere compliment.

Give others a little grace. If someone is rude to you, remember that it's likely more of a reflection of them and what's going on in their life than it is of you. Try to be sympathetic instead of annoyed. While it's not kind if someone, for example, bumps into you without apologizing as they hurry off the train, remind yourself that it wasn't personal and maybe that person's just having a bad day.

Show yourself kindness, too. Forgiving yourself for your mistakes and not expecting perfection is beneficial for your own well-being, and it may also help you become more empathetic to others.



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