Why Be Kind

Have you noticed that when we do something nice for someone else, it makes us feel good too? Perhaps it is because we grew up learning the values and morals that help us become nice people; such as proper manners, compassion and consideration and we relate those values to real-life benefits such as gratitude and recognition.

Did you ever wonder if our capacity for goodness lies in our DNA? Research from the University of Buffalo suggests that this may be true, and that some people may be born with versions of genes with receptors to oxytocin and vasopressin that make them more inclined to being "nice". Oxytocin and vasopressin are the two hormones in our body associated with feelings of love and generosity. But that does not mean someone is kind only if he/she possess the right genes; as more research has found that genetics work in accordance with our upbringing and life experiences. Another study at the University of Edinburgh showed that identical twins, who share 100 percent of their genes, had more similar attitudes toward charitable activities than did fraternal twins, who had parallel upbringings but who share only 50 percent of their genes. "We aren't saying we've found the niceness gene," Poulin said. "But we *have* found a gene that makes a contribution."

Either way, whether we're wired for "niceness" and being kind or just brought up to be polite and kind, our good nature is not only implanted in us from an early age but may also help us relate to other people, lead to better communication, and more positive relationships with colleagues, friends, family, and even perfect strangers.

Did you know that besides improving personal relationships, kindness can actually make you healthier? Continue reading and see how.

Here are some of the health benefits of being kind

1. Kindness is good for your heart
Performing an act of kindness releases the hormone oxytocin. According to Dr. David Hamilton, "oxytocin causes the release of a chemical called nitric oxide in blood vessels, which dilates (expands) the blood vessels. This reduces blood pressure and therefore oxytocin is known as a 'cardioprotective' hormone because it protects the heart (by lowering blood pressure)." Kindness strengthens your heart physically and emotionally.

2.Kindness prevents illness
Oxytocin reduces inflammation, and even little acts of kindness can trigger oxytocin's release. Inflammation in the body is associated with all sorts of health problems such as diabetes, cancer, chronic pain, obesity, and migraines. So maybe the secret sauce to a healthy, happy life is being kind?

3.It can help you live longer
Firstly, practicing acts of kindness is chemically healthy for your heart and secondly when you are kind to others, you develop strong, meaningful friendships and relationships that offer support and are associated with living a longer, healthier life. You are actually at a greater risk of heart disease if you don't have a strong network of family and friends.

Health benefits of being kind/ continued

4. Kindness releases feel-good hormones
Doing nice things for others boosts your serotonin, the neurotransmitter responsible for feelings of satisfaction and well-being; just like exercise helps release endorphins that makes you feel good.

5. Kindness eases anxiety and reduces stress
There are several ways to ease anxiety, such as meditation, exercise, spending time outdoors and natural remedies. Being kind is one of them. As pointed out in a study on happiness from the University of British Columbia, "social anxiety is associated with low positive affect (PA), a factor that can significantly affect psychological well-being". Positive affect refers to an individual's experience of positive moods such as joy, interest, and alertness. UBC researchers found that participants who engaged in kind acts displayed significant increases in PA. Reducing stress through being kind may be easier than we think. When we help someone or are kind to someone we take a break from the stressors in our own lives.

Did you know that you don't have to have money to be kind…here are some ideas:

- Say good morning
- Help someone make friends
- Let someone go first
- Smile
- Say hello
- Thank a parent
- Visit a sick friend
- Plant a tree
- Clean a neighbor's walkway
- Offer a hug
- Respect others
- Cheer up a grandma
- Thank a teacher or mentor
- Offer your seat
- Pick up litter
- Donate your time
- Give a compliment
- Smile
- Share your food
- Lend a helping hand
- Listen to an old grandpa's story

Smile is intentionally there twice ☺

Words for the wise:
- Kindness could help us live a longer, healthier life
- We're happier when we're kind
- Kindness to others may be the key to trust & success.
- Kindness eases your anxiety and stress
- It just feels better

So treat others the way you want to be treated! That is not a cliché!