The Importance of Kindness

Presented by Free World U
Table of Contents

Foreword

Part One

Like Charity, Kindness Begins at Home

Part Two

Carry Kindness Wherever You Go

References

Kindness Contract

Kindness Coupons
Foreword

We live in such a high-pressure world that sometimes we forget some very important things as we rush from one busy day to the next. One thing that is often forgotten is taking time to be kind. It sounds like such a simple idea that you might think, “That’s not true, I always take time to be kind.” Maybe you do, but most likely kindness could be a bigger part of your day and your life.

This booklet will discuss some ways you can take time to be kind. It is meant mostly to help you slow down and consider kindness as an essential element in life.

You will probably find that by making a conscious effort to perform daily acts of kindness, you will make a difference in many lives. You might be surprised to find that the biggest difference you make is in your own life. The simple act of bringing a smile to someone’s face can create a spark of joy in your heart that will change the way you see the world.

“No one has yet realized the wealth of sympathy, the kindness, and generosity hidden in the soul of a child. The effort of every true education should be to unlock that treasure.”

Emma Goldman
Part One

Like Charity, Kindness Begins at Home

Family is a word that never fails to elicit strong emotions, some positive and some negative.

The simple definition of family is “a group consisting of parents and their children.” But most people define family in a much more far-reaching way.

In the last few decades the accepted definition of family has gone through substantial changes in America and around the world. Many things have contributed to this change. Increasing divorce rates create single-parent homes, remarriage results in blended families, and single-parent adoptions are becoming more common. These are just some of the things that have brought changes in how we live as families. The economic climate we live in has also made changes in typical families. More families are coming together to live in the same home and share resources.

So we can define family as a group of people who live together, share resources, work together with common goals and values, care for and support each other, and try to keep each other safe.
By far the most important component in a family is love. Love is the tie that binds the individuals into a single unit.

There is, of course, also extended family. These are the people related by blood, marriage, or closeness. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins fit into this category. Some friends become so much a part of our lives that we consider them family.

Sadly, many people forget that it is just as important to practice acts of kindness with their own family as it is with strangers.

Kindness can strengthen the bonds of love and closeness in a family. Even when you live with people and maybe think you know everything about them, you don’t really know all that is in their hearts and minds. Therefore you don’t know when a simple act of kindness on your part might make a tremendous difference in their lives. But, if you make a habit of performing acts of kindness, you increase the chances of becoming a positive force in the lives of all those people you love.

Part of the problem with family kindness is that there is usually a lot of mixed emotions in a family. There might be days when you are not feeling particularly loving and kind toward a sibling, parent, or other family member. Maybe your parents just told
you that you can’t go somewhere, and you think they are being unfair and unreasonable. Perhaps your sister borrowed something of yours without asking and damaged it. Maybe you no longer have your own room because an elderly relative has moved in and taken yours. All of these things, and more, happen and cause tension in a family.

Performing an act of kindness can lessen tensions and create good feelings that spread throughout a family. You can make a positive difference! You have the power to make changes!

You know your family better than anybody else does, so you can probably think of many things you can do for them. Here are a dozen ideas to help you get started with your mission to spread kindness in your family.

1. If one of your siblings is having trouble learning how to do something, offer to help. Research shows that younger siblings learn better when helped by an older sibling than by a peer.

2. Take on an extra chore that you know your parents need help with. Parents are often overwhelmed with all the tasks they must perform during a day. You can make a big difference.
3. If you have younger siblings, spend extra time with them. Younger brothers and sisters often look up to and admire their older siblings. Your time is the most special gift you can give them.

4. Make your mom queen for the day or your dad king for the day. Plan with your siblings to share the household and outside chores for a day and give your parents a day off.

5. Pass out coupons that say, “Because I love you...” This sentence can end in many ways. For example, I’ll do your chores for the day when you really need a break or I’ll drop whatever I’m doing to listen if you need me.

6. Bake a special treat like cookies or brownies and put them in individual packages tied up with a bow. Put a package in dad’s briefcase, one by the coffeepot for mom’s morning coffee, or tuck one in a little brother or sister’s lunch.

7. Make an “I love you because ...” poster. Really think about what you love about another member of your family and decorate a poster that lists all the qualities
that make him or her special. Hang it up somewhere as a surprise.

8. If you don’t want to make a big poster, just leave little notes for the people in your family. Slip a note that says, “You’re the best dad!” in dad’s laptop or anywhere that he will find it.

9. If you have something that one of your siblings really wants, let him or her use it for a day. For instance, an article of clothing or a favorite game.

10. Read one of your favorite books to a younger sibling.

11. If you have elderly relatives either living with you or elsewhere, spend time with them. Show an interest in their lives and ask to hear stories about what their lives were like when they were younger. Not only will they enjoy telling you these things, you will probably enjoy listening, and you might even learn something.

12. Don’t forget the family pet. Always make sure you take care of the needs of your pets. In addition to having their needs met, pets thrive on your love and attention. Dogs and cats often spend a lot of their day waiting for you to pay attention to them. It’s easy to get so busy
doing all the things you need and want to do that you forget to give a little time to the creatures who love you unconditionally and take such joy in something as simple as a ball being tossed or a pat on the head.

Remember, when you perform an act of kindness, you shouldn’t expect to be paid or to receive anything for what you do. Sadly, some people might not even say thank you, but this doesn’t negate what you have done. The act itself should be its own reward.

“Carry out a random act of kindness, with no expectation of reward, safe in the knowledge that one day someone might do the same for you.”

Princess Diana
Part Two

Carry Kindness Wherever You Go

The kindness movement began in the mid to late 1990s when organizations were started based on the idea of spreading kindness. Nations adopted national kindness days. There is even a World Kindness Day celebrated in many countries.

The website Random Acts of Kindness offers many suggestions for kind acts and inspirational stories about how these acts have made a difference.

http://www.randomactsofkindness.org/

The Points of Light website is another good place to go to find ways that you can spread kindness. Its mission statement is: “We inspire, equip and mobilize people to take action that changes the world.” http://www.pointsoflight.org/

You can start your own kindness movement! Begin by making a habit of committing random acts of kindness. Then ask people to join you.

You can start your own kindness club. This club might be made up of just members of your family or of friends and neighbors. There are many things your kindness club can do. You can just
support and encourage each other or you might work on larger projects together. It just depends on what works best for you.

Each day you will encounter many people who are busy, stressed, worried, or sad. Just taking a moment to really look at them and smile can make a difference.

Some people lead lonely lives, especially some elderly people whose children are grown and live far away. Take the time to say a few kind words to people you meet in stores, on buses, walking down the sidewalk, or in a waiting room.

Take time to look around when you are out and about. You will often find ways you can quickly help someone who needs a hand. Perhaps in the parking lot of a grocery store you might see a mom trying to control several small children and get the groceries into the car. You could unload the groceries for her. Maybe you see an elderly neighbor walking her dog; you could offer to hold the leash and walk with her. Could you help a neighbor with yard work or snow shoveling? There are so many possibilities!

Do you have a talent like singing, dancing, or playing a musical instrument? You could visit a nursing home to entertain the
residents. Even if you don’t have a particular talent, you could still visit and just talk, listen, or read to the people there. Many don’t get lots of visitors.

If you have a kindness club, there are many projects that you can do to make a difference in your community.

Is there a park in your community that needs some attention? There might not be enough money in the city budget to clean up as often as needed. Maybe you could ask for permission to paint benches, playground equipment, and any buildings that are a part of the park to make it prettier. Maybe you could even plant some flowers.

Ask neighbors to contribute unused items such as clothes, books, toys, and household items. Find a homeless shelter, women’s shelter, or other group to donate them to.

Create a webpage to sell small crafts that the members of your club make. Use the funds earned to sponsor a family for Christmas, buy pet food for your local animal shelter, or make anonymous cash gifts to people in need.
The possibilities are really endless and as varied as the people you meet in your life. If you are looking for a way to be kind and fill a need, you will rarely have to look very far.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead

Remember: It is important to discuss your ideas with your parents. NEVER do anything that might put you in danger. This would include things like going into the homes of strangers, approaching people in isolated places where there are no other people around, and more. Always remember to be safe!
References

Material in this ebook is based on lessons in Free World U’s high school Character Development subjects.

To learn more about this important subject, please feel free to check out the lessons below.

10th grade > Character Development> Character Basics> Kindness
http://www.freeworldu.org/Flash-Cards/Kindness--9235

10th grade > Character Development> Character Basics> Kindness: Application
http://www.freeworldu.org/Flash-Cards/Kindness-and-Application--9234

At Free World U, we believe that teaching young people good character traits is as important as teaching them academic subjects.

Our curriculum covers all the essential academic subjects but is expanded to include many other important life lessons.
Follow these links to see our complete curriculum:

Elementary:

http://www.freeworldu.org/Flash-Card-Index/Elementary-School--6

Middle School:

http://www.freeworldu.org/Flash-Card-Index/Middle-School--8

High School:

http://www.freeworldu.org/Flash-Card-Index/High-School--7

We believe that character is important, so you will notice it is taught at every grade level.

The next few pages contain items you can print and use in your kindness campaign.

Enjoy, and have a wonderful day!
Kindness Contract

I promise to commit at least one, but not limited to one, senseless act of kindness a day.

I will look around me for people who might benefit from an act of kindness and consider the best way to brighten their day.

I will not allow my busy schedule or things I would rather do to interfere with this important mission.

I will not expect or accept rewards for my acts other than a smile or a simple “thank you.”

I will not brag about these acts but instead will hold them as my own private pieces of happiness.

When I speak to others, I will remember the words of Mother Teresa who said, “Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless.” I will be one voice in creating that endless echo and I will encourage others to lend their voices.

Signature _______________ Date ____________
Because I love you ...


You are special to me because ...


No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.
~Aesop

Constant kindness can accomplish much. As the sun makes ice melt, kindness causes misunderstanding, mistrust, and hostility to evaporate.
~Albert Schweitzer