Random Acts of Kindness Week

Kindness is more than buying a stranger a cup of coffee. Learning how to be kind to ourselves will help us be authentic and kind to others.

Why Dedicate a Week to Kindness?

Science finds that positive effects of kindness are experienced in the brain of those who receive or witness an act of kindness. Experiencing kindness improves mood and makes people significantly more likely to “pay it forward.”

Participate in the 7 Day Kindness Challenge, Starting February 16, 2020

Take part in our 7 days of science-based strategies to boost kindness, happiness, and social connection. The challenge will encourage you to step out of your comfort zone and do some things that maybe you haven’t done before or have wanted to do but weren’t sure how to get started. Each day’s practice offers a new science-based practice to help give your kindness a supercharge.

Challenge Themes

- Random Acts of Kindness
- Courage
- Assertiveness
- Strengths and Perseverance
- Gratitude
- Focusing on the Good
- Self-Compassion

Start Your Kindness Journey
unh.edu/health/kind

Reflect and Share

After you have completed the 7 day kindness challenge, visit unh.edu/health/kind to tell us how it went for an opportunity to win a free 50 minute massage therapy session at Health & Wellness.
Self-Compassion

Difficult situations become even more difficult when we beat ourselves up over them, interpreting them as a sign that we’re less capable or worthy than other people. This judgment makes us feel alone, unhappy, and even more stressed.

Rather than beating ourselves up, we can be kind to ourselves. With self-compassion, we give ourselves the same kindness and care we’d give to a good friend. Instead of mercilessly judging and criticizing yourself for various inadequacies or shortcomings, self-compassion means you are kind and understanding when confronted with personal failings — after all, who ever said you were supposed to be perfect? Today’s challenge walks you through the three components of self-compassion that you can use as self-care.

How to Do It

The practice should take about 5 minutes.

1. Think of a situation in your life that is difficult and is causing you stress.
2. Call the situation to mind and see if you can actually feel the stress and emotional discomfort in your body.
3. Now say to yourself, “This is a moment of suffering.” This acknowledgment is a form of mindfulness—of simply noticing what is going on for you emotionally in the present moment, without judging the experience as good or bad. You can also say to yourself, “This hurts” or “This is stress.” Use whatever statement feels most natural to you.
4. Next, say to yourself, “Suffering is a part of life.” This is a recognition of your common humanity with others—that all people have trying experiences, and these experiences give you something in common with the rest of humanity. Other options for this statement include “Other people feel this way,” “I’m not alone,” or “We all struggle in our lives.”
5. Now, offer yourself self-kindness. Put your hand over your heart, feel the warmth of your hands and the gentle touch on your chest, and say, “May I be kind to myself.” This is a way to express self-kindness. You can choose another phrase that speaks to you in the moment. Some example: “May I accept myself as I am,” “May I forgive myself,” and “May I be patient with myself.”
6. Repeat as needed, throughout the day—and week.

Why It Works

Research suggests that people who treat themselves with compassion rather than criticism in difficult times experience greater physical and mental health. The three elements in this practice—mindfulness, common humanity, and self-kindness—all play important roles in increasing compassion. Mindfulness helps us recognize and turn towards what we are feeling instead of avoiding. Common humanity helps ease feelings of loneliness by reminding us of our connection to others—everyone goes through a difficult time. Self-kindness is an active expression of care that actually works to help us feel better. The next time you notice your self-critical voice, see if you can replace it with self-compassion.

Learn More at unh.edu/health/kind

Source: Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley and Center for Mindful Self-Compassion