



Choices

Vancouver Island Counselling

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Leading with Kindness

There are certain scientifically validated activities that can be done every day that bring us many physical, mental and emotional health benefits. Examples of this include a regular exercise, mindfulness or gratitude practice.

However, did you know kind acts – even secret ones – can do wonders for your overall health and well-being? Kindness behaviors are uniquely “contagious” and their benefits continue well after the event has passed. In addition, leading with kindness, respect and honesty improves workplace relationships and adds to the overall health of any organization.

A study conducted among students at the University of British Columbia (UBC) found that performing acts of kindness can help lower people's social anxiety, which often leads to negative self-beliefs and behaviors.



UBC researchers found that any kind act appeared to have similar wellness benefits, even small gestures like opening a door for someone or saying 'thanks' to someone who has helped us. The published study (2016) states, "Kindness didn't need to involve money or time-consuming efforts, although some of our participants did do such things. Kindness didn't even need to be face to face".



Besides its potential for alleviating anxiety, there is an infectious and enduring quality to kindness that goes deeper than simply being the trendy thing to do in the moment. So far, science offers replicated evidence that it offers each of us the following important benefits -- kindness:

- ✓ releases “feel-good” hormones that bring us closer together
- ✓ is the most important predictor of satisfaction and stability in a marriage
- ✓ protects our heart health as we relax the pressure it can be under
- ✓ adds years to our life and life to our years
- ✓ regulates stress and self-regulate harsh emotions
- ✓ with its emotional regulation capacity, it reduces the onset, duration and intensity of illness
- ✓ leads to faster wound healing, pain reduction, anxiety, blood pressure and shorter hospital stays when an intentional part of medical care.



Sometimes we seek health and well-being in ways that may cost us in terms of time and money. Sometimes we may not know how to begin as we consider a path toward wellness and a more caring and compassionate lifestyle. Here is something that brings wellness on every level of your being into your control. An intentional kindness practice can begin right now...in this moment...with the next person you encounter!

“Be kind to yourself, be kind to others and let others be kind to you.”



1. Consider offering an unexpected kindness to the next person you talk to today.
2. What might be one thing you can do for you right now that would be kind and enjoyable?
3. What are you most grateful for in your life right now?
4. Who in your life might you contact just to say “hello” and express your care?

Many universities, including Harvard in the United States, are now emphasizing kindness on applications for admission.

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