

KINDNESS

According to Waguih W. Ishak, MD, Professor of Psychiatry & Behavioral Neurosciences at Cedars-Sinai in Los Angeles, CA, research suggests that acts of kindness release the hormone, oxytocin, also called the “love hormone”. It is the same hormone that is released when mothers breastfeed, promoting their emotional bond with their baby. It is tied to making us more trusting, more generous, and friendlier, while also lowering our blood pressure.

Dr. Ishak also indicates studies have also linked random acts of kindness to releasing dopamine, a chemical messenger in the brain that can give us a feeling of euphoria. We often experience this as giving us a “runner's high”. This feel-good brain chemical is credited with causing what's known as a "helper's high." In addition to boosting oxytocin and dopamine, being kind can also increase serotonin, a neurotransmitter that helps regulate mood.

While these hormones release can give us a 3-4 minute benefit, the *real key is to practice random acts of kindness repeatedly*. Practicing kindness means making it part of your daily life. It means being aware of how you treat others, witnessing the kindness of others, and most importantly being intentional with acts of kindness. Practicing kindness can be hard, such as when it is not convenient or not reciprocated. Kindness not only means being kind to others but kind to ourselves. It means allowing yourself to learn from mistakes and not putting pressure on yourself to be perfect. It also means to be kind to our bodies with healthy eating and regular exercise

Ben's Bells Project is an organization that promotes the positive impact of intentional kindness, and to inspire people to practice kindness as a way of life. At NYA, we would like to participate in their Kindness Challenge!

It is easy to join #BeKindChallenge

- Track your acts of kindness by downloading and printing the “be kind challenge” chain links from this link: <https://bensbells.org/education/bekindchallenge>
- Have the chain links available in an easy location along with pens and tape or a stapler



- Write your acts of kindness throughout the day on the slips and add each new slip to the chain. Leave your chain in a common area of the house. Kindness can be enacted towards anyone. Remember to record kindnesses that you do for others and for yourself!
- Use the Kindness at Home calendar as a resource to practice kindness

When this is all over, you will have your chain links of kindness to remind you of how you made it through a challenging time!

