



Canadian Mental  
Health Association  
*Mental health for all*

# Why Kindness Matters

Kindness is broadly defined as the quality of being collegial, generous and considerate.<sup>1</sup> Being kind is associated with many characteristics but at its core it is about showing warmth, care and concern for others. Being kind can be innate, but it is also something that we can intentionally practice, and there are many good reasons to actively do so.

**Kindness has been proven to release “feel-good” hormones (like oxytocin and serotonin) that make us feel more calm, happy, and energetic—and can also improve overall health and well-being by:<sup>2</sup>**

- Lowering stress levels
- Reducing anxiety and depression
- Preventing illness
- Reducing pain
- Strengthening relationships

The best part is that kindness has been shown to be contagious—it makes us feel good to simply see someone being kind (and it makes us more likely to “pay it forward”).

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## Kindness at Work

There is growing evidence that, in addition to the personal benefits, acts of kindness can enhance the well-being of employees and entire organizations. Organizations that encourage staff at all levels to practice kindness as a core value tend to see:

- Improved work relationships and collaboration<sup>3</sup>
- Increased job performance<sup>4</sup>
- Higher job (and life) satisfaction<sup>5</sup>
- Increased ability to cope positively with change or other stressful circumstances<sup>6</sup>

A culture of kindness can also have positive impacts on customer satisfaction and retention—having a direct impact on the bottom line.





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## What are some things you can do to show kindness at work?

There are some quick and easy things employees at all levels can do to create an atmosphere of kindness at work:

**Show appreciation** – when someone has gone above and beyond, or stayed positive when things were stressful, let them know you appreciate it. (Tip: Use *Kindness Cards* to pay it forward.)

**Acknowledge effort** – take time at the start of a meeting to thank team members for their contribution on successes, big or small.

**Lend a hand** – if a co-worker is feeling stressed, ask if there's something you can do to help them out.

**Show you care** – don't shy away from showing colleagues you care about them as people first. Ask them how they're doing, listen to what's going on with them and have the courage to talk openly. (Tip: The *Let's Get Talking* cards and online activity can give you talking points for challenging conversations.)

### Random Acts of Kindness – *Mission: Possible*

Foster a more positive work culture by accepting a random act of kindness mission at [notmyselftoday.ca/culture](http://notmyselftoday.ca/culture)

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## Other Not Myself Today resources:

- Resource Sheet: *Your Role in Fostering a Positive Work Culture*
- Activity: *Let's Get Talking Card Packs* and online activity
- Activity: *Mission: Possible*

## References

- 1 Hall, Karen (2017). *The Importance of Kindness: Being kind can strengthen your relationships and a sense of satisfaction in life*. Psychology Today. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/pieces-mind/201712/the-importance-kindness>
- 2 The Random Acts of Kindness Foundation ©1995-2020. <https://www.randomactsofkindness.org/the-science-of-kindness>
- 3 Davidson, J. E., Graham, P., Montross-Thomas, L., Norcross, W., & Zerbi, G. (2017). *Code Lavender: cultivating intentional acts of kindness in response to stressful work situations*. EXPLORE, 13(3), 181-185.
- 4 Jurkiewicz, C. L., & Giacalone, R. A. (2004). *A values framework for measuring the impact of workplace spirituality on organizational performance*. Journal of Business Ethics, 49(2), 129-142.
- 5 Chancellor, J., Margolis, S., Jacobs Bao, K., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2018). *Everyday prosociality in the workplace: The reinforcing benefits of giving, getting, and glimpsing*. Emotion, 18(4), 507.
- 6 Weitz, K. (2011). *Positivity (happiness) in the workplace and organizational change*.