

Personal Safety Nets® e-Newsletter



Kindness: Random & Specific

May 2010, Issue 29

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The Reality of Kindness

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Letters, We Get Letters. . .

Q: Let me say that I enjoy getting, reading, and forwarding your monthly e-Newsletter. I wonder how you choose the topics for your focus?
Bill B.



A: Thanks for reading and for your inquiry. Simply put, **the focus of our e-Newsletter rotates with each edition, to bring you information about our eight core values** (as listed on all our printed materials and on our website). **This month it's KINDNESS.** We also address other topics every now and again as we move through the year. Too, we feature guest writers and stories from our readers that either relate to the month's topic, or focus on an issue of building or using a personal safety net. In order to help readers understand the meaning of a personal safety net and to prepare and use them as a continuing process, **we elaborate on our core values - which serve to make your process more complete. Our core values:**



Effectiveness - can always be enhanced by preparation and practice.

Learning - happens throughout all of life and can be planned.

Community - essential to

The Reality of Kindness



The thought of "kindness" as the topic for this month's e-Newsletter (see how we select our topics in Letters) led me to ask an officemate, **"What do you think of when I say the word 'kindness'?"** She answered, "It reminds me of sitting around a camp fire and singing Kumbaya." She said her allusion to this folk song represented a cynical and satirical view of human nature as naively optimistic, "thinking kindness will help you and the world." I had an immediate knot in my stomach. I loved singing Kumbaya at camp. Okay, I do wake up happy, and love extending kindness to others and having others extend their kindness to me, but **am I really naively clinging to a concept that has no value and no reality?**

I found my first support when my yoga teacher said the focus of the day's practice was "kindness." "Think of it during the workout and the upcoming week with the idea of translating that into one act of kindness for another and one for your self during that time," she said. I looked around the room and everyone was smiling. **They seemed warm to the idea of "kindness," so we're not all Oscar the Grouch, but have we all been brainwashed?**

Certainly a Google search would provide research and documentation. First, in order to be fair, **I searched for negative effects of kindness - hours worth of searching, and came up with no research that told me kindness had a negative effect on one's life or health.** So I headed in a positive direction and hit the mother lode. Yes, there is an organization, the Random Acts of Kindness Foundation, and it seeks to quantify and support kindness. Using Allan Luks' investigated research in *The Healing Power of Doing Good: The Health and Spiritual Benefits of Helping Others*, **I found numerous scientific studies showing acts of kindness result in significant health benefits, both physical and mental. Here are some key findings of contemporary research:**



- Helping contributes to the maintenance of good health, and it can diminish the effect of diseases and disorders - serious and minor, psychological and physical.
- A rush of euphoria, followed by a longer period of calm, after performing a kind act is often referred to as a "helper's high," involving physical sensations and the release of the body's natural painkillers, the endorphins. This initial rush is then followed by a longer-lasting period of improved emotional well-being.
- Stress-related health problems improve after performing kind acts. Helping reverses feelings of depression, supplies social contact, and decreases feelings of hostility and isolation that can cause stress, overeating, ulcers, etc. A drop in stress may, for some people, decrease the constriction within the lungs that leads to asthma attacks.
- Helping can enhance our feelings of joyfulness, emotional resilience, and vigor, and can reduce the unhealthy sense of isolation.
- The incidence of attitudes, such as chronic hostility, that negatively arouse and damage the body is reduced.
- The health benefits and sense of well-being return for hours or even days whenever the helping act is remembered.
- An increased sense of self-worth, greater happiness, and optimism, as well as a decrease in feelings of helplessness and depression, is achieved.

happiness and longevity and part of strength.

Kindness - can come from unexpected quarters and helps us all.

Security - enhanced through connection to others.

Power - being able to see and affect choices and ask for help.

Hope - a cornerstone of strength.

Humor - smooths the bumps, raises the spirits, and heals.

- Regular club attendance, volunteering, entertaining, or faith group attendance is the happiness equivalent of getting a college degree or more than doubling your income.

From this and the hours I spent tracking research, for me, the answer is pretty clear: it's

naive not to see the value and reality that kindness brings to your own health and that of others.

If you're still not sure, do your own search, or check out some of the Cool Free Downloads listed in the story below. And one last thought, remember not everyone will ask for help, so try to walk in their shoes and think of their needs. That kindness will go a long, long way - for both of you.



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Downloads of Kindness

Join the BLOG!

Stay more connected and work towards building a more informed community.



We're always seeking information, comments, news and stories from YOU - and you can give us instant feedback and insight into your lives and the world around you.

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**Story Theme Index
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1) People with the best intentions sometimes get overwhelmed by the idea of charity, help or kindness. They think they need a great deal of time or money or courage to make a real difference in the world. Anne Herbert said, "practice random acts of kindness and senseless acts of beauty;" by doing this, you can help every day with small but important acts of encouragement and generosity. For those who need direction, here's a great list of places to start.

2) HelpOthers.org is dedicated to proving that kindness is contagious. It's a great a portal dedicated to small acts of kindness - with ideas and suggestions aplenty. Great to share with the kids to get them started too.

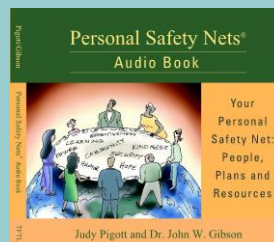
3) Research has shown that a simple act of kindness directed towards another improves the functioning of the immune system and stimulates the production of serotonin in both the recipient of kindness and the person extending kindness. Even more amazing is that persons observing the act of kindness have similar beneficial results. Here are a few reminders of ways we can show the simplest kindnesses, daily.

4) A truly great and fairly complete summation of the relationship of kindness and health - complete with research, stories and ideas has been put in PDF format Random Acts of Kindness - The New Health Food by Rebecca Matson, Marketing Coordinator of The Caring Presence. It's a great place to get started and to learn.

Our Offer Still Stands!

We'd like to make a trade with you! If you read the "letters" section of our e-Newsletter, you read a variety of stories and interesting questions that are provided to us.

If you write us your Personal Safety Net story, or ask us a question, and we answer in our e-Newsletter, we'll trade you our Audio Book - a \$35.00 value, yours FREE.



Not sure if your story is a good one? Of course it is! Every story is a help to another - so please share. You and your story may serve as part of someone else's Personal Safety Net - providing valuable help, guidance or experience. Please pass on your experience or observation.

When we use your contribution in one of our e-Newsletters, in our Stories Section, or in our blog you'll get the satisfaction of knowing you've helped someone else. For your courage, hard work and thoughtfulness you'll received an Audio Book in trade.

You can email us your question or story, or simply share it directly to our website. Happy trading!