



Be kind. Be healthy.

Did you know November 13 is World Kindness Day? It's a day to focus on showing kindness to others in hopes that this will one day be the norm for everyone, every day. Being kind to others and shining the spotlight on them can brighten their day and yours, too. Here are some ideas to sprinkle in a few simple acts of kindness on this day — and on any day that you choose.

Say something nice. Shower a friend, family member, co-worker — or even a stranger — with a compliment. You can text, email or say it in person. If you use social media, consider using the platform to express kindness instead of criticizing, complaining or being negative, which can easily happen online.

Write a letter. Getting a hand-written note in the mail can really feel nice. Picture that as you capture a kind thought or sentiment in a letter and send via “snail mail” to someone near and dear to you.

Go out of your way for someone else. From something small, like holding open a door for the person behind you, to something bigger, like helping an elderly person pack their groceries or load them into their vehicle, find a way to do something kind for another. Other ideas: Let someone merge into traffic even if you don't have to; offer to let someone in line behind you go first at checkout in a store; compliment a co-worker directly to their boss for a job well done.

Pay it forward when driving through. If you're in line at a drive-thru coffee or food chain, consider buying the order for the person behind you. It's a small gesture than can make a big impact. And may even inspire that person to pass on the same kindness to another.

Volunteer to pay it forward in a bigger way. Aside from buying the cup of coffee for the person behind (who may not need your financial assistance anyhow), consider ways you can get involved in your community to show

kindness to others. (Hint: You can look up local volunteer opportunities on [liveandworkwell.com](https://www.liveandworkwell.com).)

Stay connected in other ways. Saying nice things, calling “just because” or texting to ask, “How are you?” are all kind ways you can show the people around you that you care. And remember that being kind can help you be healthy, too. Your family, friends and team members — AKA your social connections — are an important part of your health. Having strong social ties can help you reduce stress, stay mentally sharp and even lengthen your lifespan. See how acts of kindness can help you feel stronger connections with your community — and start today.

The happy factor

A lot of things factor into your health, including — yep, you guessed it — your happiness. Check out some surprising things that can help boost your mood. (Hint: Sometimes, it's the little things.)

1. **Having furry friends**

No matter your preference, cats, dogs or even lizards, statistics show that having pets can benefit your health — and your happiness. With a furry friend, you may have lower blood pressure, higher quality of life and even less stress, anxiety and depression. (Hint: Consider adoption.)

2. **Saying your “thank you’s”**

People who regularly express and feel gratitude tend to be more optimistic and satisfied in life, have higher self-esteem and sleep better. They also tend to have stronger relationships and communities. And they may even have improved physical health — people who show more gratitude are more likely to exercise more frequently and have fewer doctor’s visits, too.

3. **Laughing out loud**

Watching your favorite funny movie or catching up with a witty friend can be just what the doctor ordered, so to speak. Laughter lowers cortisol, your body’s stress hormone, and promotes brain chemicals called endorphins to lift your mood.

4. **Enjoying a strong community**

Believe it or not, your social connections (friends, family and even your fellow team members) can have a big impact on your life. Strong ties to your community can help reduce stress, stay mentally sharp and even lengthen your lifespan. Consider strengthening **your** community by volunteering. (For ideas on local volunteering options, go to liveandworkwell.com and use your company access code.)

5. **Moving more**

Adding movement gives you endorphins. And those can brighten your outlook on life. But you don’t have to buy a treadmill to realize the happy factor of exercise. You can start with smaller steps, like taking the stairs a few more times or walking your dog an extra block.

Being kind to yourself

Self-esteem is having respect or confidence in yourself and how you interpret your abilities, appearance and/or attributes. It reflects an overall sense of value or worth, and it affects our thoughts, feelings and behaviors. Often, words such as self-worth, self-image and self-respect are used interchangeably with self-esteem. In short, a healthy self-esteem means you accept and value yourself for exactly who you are, even your flaws.

Why self-esteem matters

Self-esteem impacts every area of our lives, including our mental and emotional health and how we operate at work and in relationships. Your level of self-esteem also varies throughout different stages of life. If high school was a particularly difficult period of your life, your self-image may have been lower than it is now. Perhaps getting older is causing lower self-esteem than how you once viewed yourself. Our self-perception is often linked with how others have treated us in the past. We might make past or current judgments about ourselves based on those experiences.

Being kind to yourself

If you are looking to better your self-image, here are several practical steps to follow to help improve your self-esteem and take inventory of your thoughts:

1. **Triggers**— Identify what or who triggers negative thinking. A difficult co-worker? Looking at your bank account? Interactions with certain family members? You can't avoid every trigger, but you can plan how you will respond to it.
2. **Self-talk**— Next, listen to your thinking, or "self-talk." What do you tell yourself? Is it based on fact or emotion? Is it irrational or irrational? Assuming the worst in every situation will take a toll on your self-esteem.
3. **Accuracy**— Are your thoughts true? If not, challenge them. Often times our thoughts are influenced more by perception than reality. Here are some examples:
 - Black-and-white thinking — "If I don't get this promotion, I might as well quit; jobs never work out for me."
 - Jumping to conclusions — "He hasn't contacted me because he doesn't like me."
 - Downplaying the positive — "She only asked me to go out because all her other friends were busy."
 - Overgeneralizing — "I never get things right. I'm always so stupid."
4. **Positivity**— Replace negative thoughts with positive ones. Encourage yourself by focusing on the positive. Avoid thinking of "should-have" and "could-have" scenarios. When mistakes are made, you can learn to forgive yourself. Give yourself credit for good things and even small wins.

Taking care of yourself

Learning to change how you interpret life takes energy. Taking time every day to care for yourself will help you feel healthy, and when you feel good you are more likely to be positive about yourself and your abilities. Listen to your body, get plenty of sleep, eat healthy and exercise regularly. Take time for activities and people you enjoy most. A simple way to enjoy life and stay positive is to help someone else.

Rearranging your thoughts and learning to take care of your body takes time and practice. The more you challenge your negative thoughts and habits, the more confident you will feel in yourself and your actions. When you are positive about yourself, you will have a positive impact on the world around you.

Connecting with your doctor, if need be

Along the spectrum of self-esteem, some people have a high sense of self-worth. Others find they have very low self-esteem, possibly facing symptoms of depression or anxiety. Feeling inadequate, unlovable and/or unworthy may accompany a lower self-image. If you find yourself on the low end of the self-image spectrum, it is important to remember you are not alone. This could be a symptom of depression, and your doctor or mental health professional can help.