

An Ounce of Prevention

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Kindness Is Something Students Learn By Feeling It

Most people have heard the phrase 'random acts of kindness', which refers to a selfless act of giving resulting in the happiness of another person. Terms like this are increasing in popularity around the world, as more people identify a deficiency in their lives that can only be fulfilled by altruism.

It seems we just can't get enough of those addictive feel good emotions and with good reason.

Scientific studies have shown that kindness has a great number of physical and emotional benefits, and that children require a healthy dose of the warm and fuzzies in order to flourish as health, happy, well-rounded individuals.

Patty O'Grady, PhD, is an expert in the area of neuroscience, emotional learning, and positive psychology with special attention to the educational arena. She believes that "kindness changes the brain by the experience of kindness. Children and adolescents do not learn kindness by only thinking about it and talking about it. Kindness is best learned by feeling it so that they can reproduce it. Kindness is an emotion that students feel and empathy is a strength that they share."

A great number of benefits have been reported to support the theory of teaching kindness in schools.

8 Reasons For Teaching Kindness In School

1. Happy Children

Science explains that the good feelings we experience when being kind are produced by endorphins that activate areas of the brain that are associated with pleasure, social connection and trust, and it's proven that these feelings of joyfulness are contagious, encouraging more kind behaviour by the giver and recipient.

2. Increased Peer Acceptance

Research on the subject has determined that kindness increases our ability to form meaningful connections with others. Studies show that kind, happy children enjoy greater peer acceptance because they are well-liked and that better than average mental health is reported in classrooms that practice more inclusive behaviour due to an even distribution of popularity.

3. Improved Health and Less Stress

It's widely documented that being kind can trigger a release of the hormone oxytocin which has a number of physical and mental health benefits as it can significantly increase a person's level of happiness and reduce stress. More recently though, it's been found it plays a significant role in the cardiovascular system, helping protect the heart by lowering blood pressure and reducing free radicals and inflammation, which incidentally speed up the aging process.

4. Greater Sense of Belonging and Improved Self Esteem

Studies show that people experience a 'helpers high' when they do a good deed, a rush of endorphins that creates a lasting sense of pride, well-being and an enriched sense of belonging. Even small acts of kindness are reported to heighten our sense of well-being, increase energy and give a wonderful feeling of optimism and self worth.

5. Increased Feelings of Gratitude

When children are part of projects that help others less fortunate than themselves, it provides them with a real

sense of perspective and helps them appreciate the good things in their own lives.

6. Better Concentration and Improved Results

As it increases serotonin, which plays an important part in learning, memory, mood, sleep, health and digestion, kindness is a key ingredient that helps children feel good. Having a positive outlook allows them greater attentions spans and enables more creative thinking to produce better results at school.

7. Less Bullying

Two Penn State Harrisburg faculty researchers, Shanetia Clark and Barbara Marinak say, "unlike previous generations, today's adolescents are victimizing each other at alarming rates." They argue adolescent bullying and youth violence can be confronted through in-school programs that integrate "kindness — the antithesis of victimization."

Many traditional anti-bullying programs focus on the negative actions that cause children anxiety and often with little impact. Teaching kindness and compassion in schools, not only fosters the positive behaviour that creates warm and inclusive school environments, but helps children feel that they belong. It's documented that the effects of bullying can be significantly reduced by integrating kindness based programs in schools.

8. Reduced Depression

Dr. Wayne Dyer, internationally renowned author and speaker, says research has discovered that an act of kindness increases levels of serotonin (a natural chemical responsible for improving mood) in the brain. It's also found that serotonin levels are increased in both the giver and receiver of an act of kindness, as well as anyone who witnesses that kindness, making it a wonderful natural antidepressant.

Conclusion

Maurice Elias, a professor at Rutgers University Psychology Department says that "as a citizen, grandparent, father, and professional, it is clear to me that the mission of schools must include teaching kindness. Without it, communities, families, schools, and classrooms become places of incivility where lasting learning is unlikely to take place.

We need to be prepared to teach kindness, because it can be delayed due to maltreatment early in life. It can be smothered under the weight of poverty, and it can be derailed by victimization later in life. Yet despite these and other travails, the receipt of kindness and the ability to show kindness through service are both growth enhancing and soul cleansing.

Kindness can be taught, and it is a defining aspect of civilized human life. It belongs in every home, school, neighborhood, and society."

It's become quite clear that modern education must encompass more than just academics, that in order for children to develop into happy, confident, well-rounded individuals, matters of the heart must be taken seriously and nurtured as a matter of priority.

Note: More information and links can be found at the link below

~ by Lisa Currie, Ripple Kindness Project

<https://www.teachthought.com/pedagogy/8-reasons-for-teaching-kindness-in-schools/>

5 Tips for Dealing with the Overwhelming Fatigue of Depression

For Ruth White, the fatigue that comes with depression can be overpowering. “I find it difficult to get out of bed and once out of bed, just walking can be exhausting. Texting or even watching TV can seem to take Herculean effort,” said White, Ph.D, MPH, MSW, a clinical associate professor in the School of Social Work at the University of Southern California.

Writer Therese Borchard finds it takes longer to do mundane tasks, such as washing dishes and folding laundry. Her work also has slowed. “It takes me about twice the amount of time to write a piece as it did before I had my breakdown 10 years ago.”

Fatigue is common in depression. In fact, according to clinical psychologist Shoshana Bennett, Ph.D, “it’s unusual for fatigue not to be one of the symptoms of depression.”

Her clients often say that they know what they need to do to get better, but they just can’t do it.

This is why fatigue is so destructive. As people become tired, they stop participating in social experiences and enjoyable activities, said Margaret Wehrenberg, PsyD, a clinical psychologist and author of several books on anxiety and depression, including *The 10 Best-Ever Depression Management Techniques*.

They don’t have the energy or endurance. But isolating and not moving their body makes them even more tired and depressed. In short, fatigue and depression have a circular relationship, Wehrenberg said.

Fatigue affects people emotionally, cognitively and physically, according to Bennett. “It slows down everything.” It batters self-esteem, which is already low in people with depression.

Many of Bennett’s clients call themselves stupid. They think, “I don’t even get the plot on that TV show; what’s wrong with me?”

Bennett, who struggled with postpartum depression, recalled the powerful deceleration of her motor skills. “It was very hard to get up off the couch. And my real self is active, task-oriented and productive.”

The best thing you can do to get better is to seek professional help. This typically includes working with a therapist and, for some people, taking medication as well. As this difficult illness abates, the extreme exhaustion and lack of energy will, too.

Below are additional tips for navigating depression’s overwhelming fatigue.

1. Eat nutrient-rich foods.

Depression often causes appetite loss, especially when anxiety is present, said Bennett, author of four books on depression, including *Children of the Depressed*. She suggested setting an alarm for every two to three hours. When it rings, eat protein and a complex carbohydrate and drink water to stabilize your mood.

“Making sure I eat high-fuel foods throughout the day is a way to fight the inclination to skip meals, which would then make me more fatigued,” said White, author of the book *Preventing Bipolar Relapse*.

White eats high-fuel foods such as eggs, yogurt and meat, along with lots of raw greens and nuts.

“My diet is extremely important,” said Borchard, founder of Project Beyond Blue, an online community for people with treatment-resistant depression and other chronic mood disorders and their loved ones.

She skips sugar altogether. Even though she gets an initial spike of energy, sugar makes her drag for days. Instead, she focuses on foods that level out her blood sugar.

2. Practice good sleep hygiene.

Borchard goes to sleep at the same time every night (usually 10 p.m.) and gets up at the same time every morning (around 6 a.m.). She also carves out quiet time in the

morning to pray, meditate, read or do anything else that helps her mind rest.

3. Connect with others.

“Social engagement is powerful,” Wehrenberg said. Social media, however, isn’t the same, she said. When you’re already fatigued and you check Facebook and see all the exciting and wonderful things people are doing, you’ll probably feel worse, she said. “It’ll look like the world is having way more fun than you are.”

Instead, connect with friends in person. These don’t have to be major outings. Have a friend join you for coffee, she said.

White finds it helpful to connect with friends who support her “in taking baby steps until the clouds pass.”

4. Adjust your expectations.

“I have to continually — like four times a day — readjust my expectations,” said Borchard, who pens the blog “Sanity Break” and authored the book *Beyond Blue: Surviving Depression & Anxiety and Making the Most of Bad Genes*.

In fact, she calls her expectations the biggest threat. “If I can bring my expectations down, then I feel OK about myself. However, once I start comparing [myself] with other writers and people I respect, I’m in trouble.”

5. Practice compassionate self-talk.

Beating yourself up about being tired or calling yourself lazy only exacerbates the fatigue. It’s like being in the middle of a boxing ring pummeling yourself, adding insult to injury, Bennett said.

Pay attention to your negative self-talk. When you’re feeling bad about yourself, consider “What am I saying to myself right now?” Bennett said.

Then apologize and counter critical statements with the truth. Be specific, she said.

For instance, “I’m sorry. I didn’t deserve that. I’m doing the best I can. This isn’t laziness. I have a real illness. I’m taking good steps to help myself, such as attending therapy, drinking water and moving my body. I look forward to getting myself back.”

Also, consider what you’d say to a friend. And remember depression is a difficult illness. As Bennett said, “You can’t snap out of depression any more than you can snap out of the flu.” So be gentle with yourself.

~By Margarita Tartakovsky, M.S., Associate Editor

https://psychcentral.com/blog/5-tips-for-dealing-with-the-overwhelming-fatigue-of-depression/?li_source=LI&li_medium=popular17

Parenting Corner:

Taking Playtime Seriously

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/29/well/family/taking-playtime-seriously.html>

The Whole Brain Child - Animated

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vBEI79_oQE

**Copies of *The Whole Brain Child* available in the office

Self- Help Corner:

An increasing body of research suggests that optimistic people are healthier and happier than those who are pessimistic. But even if you are a negative thinker, you can teach yourself to make happiness a habit. Dr. Richa Sood, a Mayo Clinic general internist, has tips on how you can become more optimistic.

Mayo Clinic Minute: Boost optimism

Informative Links:

75 Things You Can Control

<https://blogs.psychcentral.com/weightless/2017/09/75-things-you-can-control/>