

The Benefits of Kindness



"I have a wish – to see small activities of kindness springing up and spreading around the world. It can start by offering little kindnesses to each other in our own individual homes, our own small communities. Then perhaps we can all start being a little kinder to each other." – Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche

The #GoKind initiative started with a simple question. "How can we be kinder to each other?"

Most everyone agrees that loving kindness is a treasure. But how did it become so rare? The news media serves up seemingly endless emotional arguments and stress-inducing discussions. If one longs for a break from the drama, is it merely a sign of escapism or apathy? If someone focuses on practicing daily acts of kindness, are they avoiding reality, or are they helping to save the planet?

Is it possible to give kindness a boost? #GoKind is based on the belief that it is.

As an added incentive, kindness gives a boost in return. Research over the past 15 years has shown that being kind and practicing altruism strengthens the immune system, reduces aches and pains, improves one's cardiovascular profile, and boosts energy and strength in elderly people. In a 2006 study, kind and loving couples had the lowest levels of atherosclerosis (clogging of the arteries). And Allan Luks, who famously researched and coined the term "helper's high," found that people who do weekly volunteering are 10 times more likely to experience health benefits than those engaged in volunteering only annually.

A five-year study in the American Journal of Public Health found that people 65 and older who didn't help out friends, neighbors or relatives had a 30 percent higher chance of dying after a job loss or other stressful life event, than those with a habit of being generous. Volunteering has been shown to promote a healthy lifestyle, reduce cholesterol, and to combat stress among teens. And volunteering for a good cause can result in a greater sense of purpose, which may lower one's risk of a heart attack or stroke, according to an analysis of ten studies including around 136,000 subjects.

Simply smiling at others has a proven positive effect. In a study at the University of British Columbia, people who smiled, made eye contact or chatted with their barista reported having a more positive mood afterward.

Throughout 2017 #GoKind will be sharing questions and contemplations about what it means to be kind, as well as stories of kindness from people around the world.

"Certain people have started this thing I really like. When you're reading a book you think is beneficial or helpful, maybe it's a book promoting love, peace and kindness. When you read this book on the train or the subway or on a bus, you can leave the book there for someone else to pick up. Something like that is an expression of kindness." – Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche

The #GoKind initiative invites individuals and groups, schools and businesses with an interest in making kindness an everyday practice. Those interested in spreading altruism will find creative encouragement – #GoKind videos, quotes, images and inspiring stories – at Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/DzogchenPonlop>

Let's #GoKind together!