

What is an Act of Kindness ?

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An act of kindness is a spontaneous gesture of goodwill towards someone or something - our fellow humans, the animal kingdom, and the kingdom of nature. Kind words and deeds come from a state of benevolence, generated by a core response deep within all of us. When we carry out an act of kindness it is a message from one heart to another, an act of love, an unspoken "I care" statement.

While you may not realise it, you are performing many acts of kindness each day. Such things as smiling and greeting people in a friendly manner, whether they be friends, associates or total strangers. A kind act can be sincerely complimenting someone about their hair, eyes, smile, laugh, an item of clothing or jewellery, their positive outlook, their caring attitude, or something they do or have done well. It can be helping someone on or off with their coat, opening a door, saying please, thank you, excuse me, and other common courtesies that unfortunately are not very common these days. It can be giving your total attention to people when they are talking, it can be offering support to someone who has a problem, it can be helping to heal a rift. Or it can be not doing something. For example, refraining from such things as gossiping, finding fault, or making negative judgements.

A kindness can be acting out all of those lovely, 'soft' words that are in our vocabulary, words such as caring, thoughtful, loving, sympathetic, gentle, considerate, warm, compassionate, understanding, forgiving, friendly, tender, amiable, genial, unselfish, generous, helpful, supporting, nurturing. These are words that acknowledge, respect, join, unite, words that build bridges between us. And oh, how the world needs such words! Wouldn't it be wonderful to sprinkle more of these words and actions in our home, our work, our community? Humankind is capable of such beautiful things, and how sad it is that we lose sight of this all too easily. Will you help to warm your home, your work, your community, by using a greater number of such soft words and actions?

As more and more people join the Kindness Revolution, the downward spiral of society fuelled by selfishness, materialism and greed will be slowed, and even reversed. As this happens it will promote an enhanced feeling of 'belonging' in the community, and give a greater sense of meaning and purpose to all of our lives.

When carrying out acts of kindness, care should be taken not to intrude or embarrass - 'discretion' is the operative word. Give your smile or whatever, and then move on, unless the receiver gives out signals that they would like to talk. If you linger, the receiver could feel an obligation to reciprocate, or perhaps become embarrassed and resent the kind act. Some kind acts may be able to be carried out anonymously. It absolves the receiver of any sense of awkwardness or indebtedness, and for the giver, it becomes an enjoyable game. Also, anonymous kindness bypasses our ego's demand for attention, and is the highest form of kindness.

The kind acts we can carry out toward animals and nature are not difficult to imagine. It is in our interest to be friendly toward animals, and to ensure they are cared for, even if they are not our own. We all have a duty to ensure that animals are not mistreated or neglected, and if they are, to take appropriate steps to ensure the situation is remedied.

Whether or not we acknowledge it, humanity has a strong bond with nature, and if we choose to ignore this, we do so at our peril. For too long nature has been considered as something that can be destroyed or plundered. The well being of our world (and civilisation) is dependent upon this culture of abuse being eradicated. We must also consider future generations, and this means being more careful in our consumption of electricity and water. Even though this message is being vigorously promoted by the electricity and water suppliers, few seem interested in reducing their usage. There has been a fall of over ten percentage points in the last ten years of people concerned about the state of the environment. This is alarming. Do what you can to help the environment - you will also be helping to create a better world for your children and grand children.