

How Acts of Kindness Can Positively Impact Your Own Health

In a culture rocked by divisiveness, it is interesting to me that two of the most popular movies in theaters last weekend during the Thanksgiving holiday were about kindness. Both the whodunit *Knives Out* and the Mr. Rogers biopic *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood* bring out the practical side of kindness.

What is kindness, really? What does it mean to be kind?

The dictionary defines kindness as “the quality of being friendly, generous and considerate.” As Christians, we recognize kindness as one of the fruits of the Spirit. Most religions and cultures extol kindness as a virtue. So why is kindness so rare today?

Many equate kindness with being naive or allowing yourself to be taken advantage of by others. On the contrary; being kind takes courage and strength. Often times there is risk, but kindness is worth the risk.

As Mr. Rogers so eloquently stated, “There are three ways to ultimate success: The first way is to be kind. The second way is to be kind. The third way is to be kind.”

Did you know that being kind can positively impact *your* health? Acts of kindness bring an emotional warmth, which produces oxytocin—the “cuddle hormone”—in your brain. I’ll spare you the brain chemistry lesson, but studies show kindness boosts your immune system, slows aging, raises self-esteem and lowers blood pressure.

And the benefits don’t stop there. *Kindness spreads its positive effects on to others.* Kindness expressed in even the

smallest things—a friendly smile, a greeting, holding the door open for someone or offering a word of encouragement—can be powerfully impactful.

As human beings, you and I are designed for connection with others. Kindness is the way we build connection; being kind to ourselves and to one another.

Luke 6:31 says, “Be kind to others as you would have them be kind to you” (author’s paraphrase).

In Ephesians 4:32 (NIV 1984), we read, “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another just as in Christ, God forgave you.”

The ultimate goal in this life is to become like our Father, reflected in the life of Christ, His Son. Jesus exhibited kindness in every word he spoke and in every action he took during his 33 years walking this planet. Jesus was kindness personified; leaving heaven, coming to earth and being born in a dirty manger, ministering to and serving others—and of course, the ultimate kindness, willingly dying on the cross for you and me.

As we reflect over this special season of the year, let us always remember that it was God, lying there in that manger, and it was God hanging there on the cross. The only God in the universe has nail prints in his hands ... for you and me.

Dr. David Hoskins is the CEO of Honey Lake Clinic, the only licensed residential Christian behavioral treatment center in the world. Offering 24/7 nursing, medical doctors, psychiatrists and a pharmacy on campus, Honey Lake Clinic is a JCAHO-accredited, DCF-licensed, specially equipped hospital caring for people struggling with depression and anxiety.