KIND THINGS TO DO . . . for yourself, and for others

If you can think of any more kindnesses, please contact us ch@kindness.com.au or write to The Australian Kindness Movement, PO Box 1, The Oaks NSW 2570, Australia, and we will add them to our lists.

* As we mention in all of our literature, the easiest way to spread kindness is to smile at the people you make eye contact with each day. At work, at home, when shopping, wherever you are. Family, friends, associates, strangers, anyone you make eye contact with. Vicki Bennett, in her book I've Found the Keys, Now Where’s the Car?, tells us "Wherever you go, remember to take your smile with you." (There are situations where a smile may be misinterpreted, so common sense should prevail). Your smile not only brightens the day for those you give it to, it makes you feel good too, so it's a double whammy!

* When mowing the nature strip, mow the neighbour's strip as well.

* If there is a new neighbour in the street or unit block, knock on their door and introduce yourself. You might also like to make up a list of such things as what night the garbage bin goes out, the phone number of a good electrician and plumber, the service station with the lowest petrol prices, the local volunteer organisations, your name and telephone number, and so on. This will give your new neighbour a pleasant ‘welcome’ message.

* Drop a few coins in an area where children play, where they can easily find them. Do you remember how excited you felt, when as a child you found a coin lying on the ground?

* Spend a few minutes going through your old photos, and send whatever you can part with to the people in the photos.
* Donate blood, and encourage others to do so.
* Take a nap on Sunday afternoon.
* When you ring any establishment and the person who picks up the phone sounds happy, or has a nice voice, speaks clearly, and so on, compliment them about it. If they have been helpful in any way, tell them how much you appreciate their help. If they have gone out of their way to be helpful, ask their name and write a letter to the company, advising them what an asset that person is.
* Laugh a lot.
* Encourage kind behaviour, and praise anyone you encounter being kind.
* Believe in Fairy Godmothers, miracles, love at first sight, happy endings, knights in shining armour, and you give them permission to materialise in your life.
* If you have any surplus books in good condition, consider offering them to your local library or a senior citizen's centre.
* Write letters of appreciation to groups who are helping the community, the environment, etc.
* Tell someone you love and appreciate them – and do it often.
* Avoid negative self-talk.
* Give surplus clothing, toys, etc. to charities.
* Never criticise anyone’s dreams of the future.
* Send a card to a friend or relative you haven’t seen for some time. Include a photo of yourself and/or your family.
* When your child talks to you, given them your full attention.
* Be gentle with planet Earth.
* In any disagreement, always act fairly.
* Lie on the grass and watch the clouds.
* Be considerate of other people’s feelings.
* Examine your diet and establish if you could make a few minor changes to make it a more healthy one. Keep checking it from time to time, to see if you can do anything to make it more nourishing.
* Consider whether you need to avoid genetically modified (GM) foods.
* Once each year, go somewhere you have never been. It could be to an overseas country, or somewhere like an amusement park, a horse race meeting, a barn dance, a new restaurant, and so on.
* Say "Bless you!" when anyone sneezes (particularly strangers – the response is normally humorous), and when someone does this to you, say "Thank you!"
* Promote kindness wherever you go.
* When phoning someone, ask "Have I phoned at the wrong time?". If they are busy, ask when you can call back.
* Wave and smile at children in school busses, and at children or dogs in the car next to you at the traffic lights, or if they are looking out the back window of the car in front of you. However, remember to keep your attention on the road while doing so!
* Go to the assistance of anyone who appears to be in trouble - the person who doesn’t seem to have a coin for the parking meter; someone who looks confused, lost or traumatised; a shopper who can’t reach an item on a high shelf; a driver who might need to be guided into a parking spot; someone who is carrying a heavy or unwieldily parcel, and so on.
* Turn off the TV and read a book (or communicate with the family).
* Play with your children.
* Focus on the moment.
* Hug a tree.
* Promote the ANZAC spirit (doing what is right, regardless of the odds or their fears).
* Always keep a promise – ALWAYS!
* Remember that in any situation you are not a ‘loser.’ It may not have turned out the way you wanted it to, but who is to know what is the best thing for you? In the long run, what you thought was the ‘wrong’ outcome may well have been the best opportunity for you.
* Buy Australian made goods.
* Don’t be reluctant to say "Sorry." With practise it comes easily, and the habit will endear you to your loved ones and friends.
* Are you relatively drug free? Do you keep cigarettes, alcohol, coffee. etc. to a minimum? Do you only use over-the-counter and prescription drugs when they are absolutely necessary? Do you refrain from using recreational drugs?
* Send an anonymous scratch card, lottery or theatre ticket to someone you know – or a gift voucher, a funny card, a chocolate bar, or whatever you feel they would enjoy.
* Keep life simple.
* If you know someone who is having a hard time financially, pop a $5, $10 or $20 note in an
envelope, disguise your writing or type the envelope, and post it to them. They will talk about it for weeks, remember it forever, and wonder who it was that sent it.
* Practise seeing the world as a child might see it – new and interesting things that make the world a fascinating place.
* Ponder on the real needs of yourself and your family, and respond to them.
* Help an out of work person find a job.
* When talking on the phone, smile. The smile will come through in your voice.
* Give a friend or business associate a kind word, a small gift, or make them a cup of coffee, when they are on a downer.
* Have a think about what you may be able to make, rather than buy. If you are thinking, "I don't have the time", realise you may be suffering from a disease carried over from the 20th century, called ‘distorted time perception.’ If you are thinking, "I don’t have the talent", develop ways to enhance your creativity. If you are thinking, "I wouldn't know where to start", borrow a book on whatever it is, or enrol in one of the many courses that are available. If you are thinking, "I can't be bothered", ask yourself why you have lost your enthusiasm for living.
* If you make a mistake, the best thing to do is own it, and take appropriate action.
* Learn to do one thing at a time.
* Feed an expired parking meter if there is a parking officer in the vicinity.
* If the person behind you in the shopping queue only has a few items, consider asking them if they would like to go ahead of you.
* Take some cake, chocolates, flowers etc. to the neighbours, or a senior citizen nearby. Be sure that the neighbour is aware you are not trying to romance their partner!
* Do it for love.
* Volunteer for some community work. Apart from the well known charities there is an organisation called Volunteering Australia. They are listed in the White Pages under "Volunteer .. " followed by the name of your state. They will help to place you with a suitable organisation.
* Be romantic.
* Set aside 15-20 minutes of quiet time for yourself.
* If you have the choice to be right or to be kind, choose kind (Wayne Dyer).
* Take flowers to a hospital ward and give them to someone who hasn't had any visitors.
* Promote equality and fair play.
* Pay for the next one or more cups of coffee or tea of fellow diners when you are settling your bill.
* Plant trees to help offset the destruction of our forests.
* Treat others with respect, and you will find that others will respect you.
* Walk through a forest and enjoy the peace, the sights, the sounds, the aromas.
* Sing in the shower.
* Take an active interest in the young people from your area, and if the area lacks facilities for them, organise a group to do something about it, or approach a group who could do something about it, or write a letter to your council or local paper.
* Believe in miracles.
* When sending a letter or card to someone, include a leaf from a tree or shrub, or a flower that can easily be enclosed inside the card or between the pages of your letter. You may even choose to just send the leaf or flower in an envelope, and make it an anonymous gesture. Another variation would be to enclose a copy of our leaflet.
* Contemplate life.
* Don’t expect money or material things to bring you happiness. If they do, then it’s a bonus.
* If you see a mother with a pram about to ascend or descend stairs, offer to help carry the pram.
* If ever you are stumped for a birthday, Christmas or other gift, consider giving the person a gift membership to the Australian Kindness Movement.
* Give small tokens of your love to family, friends, children and the elderly for no particular reason - for example: flowers or a flower, a card (particularly home made cards), a fruit basket, a poem, a handkerchief, a hug.
* Visit local aged care facilities and become a voluntary companion for a lonely patient. Ask the facility if you can use a skill you have. For example, it might be manicure and beauty care, reading books or papers, playing an instrument for entertainment, offering to write and/or post mail, taking them on shopping trips or short walks, playing cards. Also bear in mind that bringing children, as well as pets, into this kind of environment is a highlight for the frail and aged.
* Stop blaming others.
* Offer to baby sit so parents/guardians can have time alone or away.
* Donate magazines/literature to medical services, aged care facilities, schools or kindergartens.
* Wash someone’s car as a surprise.
* If you are well off, consider putting some of it to use in helping others while you are still alive. That is wealth’s greatest satisfaction. And do it without fanfare – let the action be from your heart, rather than from your ego.
* Give people the benefit of the doubt.
* Donate to the needy – money, clothes, food.
* At the onset of colder weather, donate warm clothing, blankets, etc. for the homeless.
* Clean someone’s home.
* Acknowledge every person you encounter.
* Advertise locally to help with odd jobs on a volunteer basis, for aged or handicapped people.
* Be someone’s hero.
* Offer to baby sit for a few days during your holidays.
* Stop to give a lift home to an elderly person laden with shopping at a bus stop.
* Visit a facility for the underprivileged/disabled, and volunteer to do an activity that staff may not have time to do.
* Support your community.
* Enter someone in a competition – they may win a prize!
* If someone has a dog, and the person is temporarily incapacitated due to an illness or injury, offer to take the dog for a walk.
* Pay for nappy service as a gift for new parents.
* Go to opportunity shops and purchase toys in good condition and donate them to charities for children.
* Surprise somebody with a small gift that they may be unable to afford.
* Get involved with a youth group.
* Give a long term hospital patient a gift of a writing pack including pen, envelopes and stamps. If they have trouble writing, offer to write letters for them.
* Give a gift voucher for petrol or food.
* Send a phone card with a letter.
* Be courteous in traffic and in parking lots.
* Stop to take a lost animal to its owner or to an animal shelter.
* Have a kind word and gentle touch for those who you have contact with.
* Make up the difference if somebody in the queue in front of you doesn't have enough money.
* Offer to be a wheel chair pusher if you know of a disabled group going on an outing.
* Volunteer for 'Meals on Wheels'.
* Shout someone a movie or a meal.
* Take your neighbour's washing off the line if it's raining and they are not home, or put out/take in the rubbish bin/recycling box.
* Be the best role model you can be.
* If a friend is getting married, make up a basket of goodies, for example, a bottle of wine, a candle holder with candle, relaxing/romantic instrumental tape, massage oil, bubble bath, disposable camera and small photo album and note book.
* Step aside to allow a frail or elderly person to go ahead of you in a queue.
* When travelling on public transport, offer your seat to someone.
* Take up yoga, or meditate (or both).
* Make a list of all the things that bring you enjoyment. Try not to let a day go by without doing at least one of them.
* Share your laughter and your smiles.
* Smile, regardless of your mood. It has been scientifically proven that smiling when you are on a downer will lift your mood.
* Donate home made goods to charity market stalls.
* If someone is home bound through sickness or injury, ask them if they would like you to buy some groceries for them when you go shopping, or post a letter for them, or buy some stamps.
* Tell people you are there for them, to love and support them.
* Go walking, not just for the exercise, but to observe the flowers and the miracle of nature. Use the opportunity to greet anyone you encounter, and you could make some new friends. Some walkers carry a plastic bag with them, to pick up any litter they come upon. If you hear a bird, stop and try to find it and observe what it is doing. Engage yourself in this wonderful thing called "life."
* Say "Thank you" when you leave the check out, the bus, when someone holds open a door for you, at the theatre when you are given the ticket, and so on.
* Smile and laugh more often.
* Join the Australian Kindness Movement.
* Do that thing that you have been putting off.

KIND THINGS TO DO . . . for your partner

* When your partner speaks to you, listen! We realise that with some people it will not be
possible to listen to every word they say. We have in mind the people who continually vocalise their thoughts. In such cases you will need to make an agreement that when something of significance is to be discussed, you will be told before hand. You can then sit together, look into each other’s eyes, hold hands if you wish, and savour the moment.

* Send funny and romantic cards. Also try your hand at making your own card. Even if you make a very bad card, your partner will think it is wonderful! And bear in mind that the next one you make will be better.

* Don’t take your partner for granted. Keep doing all those nice little things you did when you first met. Be polite, helpful and caring. Open doors, help them on and off with their coats, offer to run an errand, tell them how great they look, don’t forget to say ‘please’, ‘thank you’, ‘sorry’, and most importantly – ‘I love you!’ A word of warning – don’t go overboard in helping them, they may develop what is termed ‘learned helplessness.’ Too much could also send a message that you consider them as being helpless or useless.

* Bring flowers or some other small gift home, but not on the same day each week. The same day could put you under that dreadful category of being "predictable", which can very easily be replaced with "boring". You could also pick a flower, or a few different types of leaves, or a seed pod, a small stone, and other things from nature, to present to your partner.

* Whenever you are near shops, always keep an eye out for some little thing your partner might like. The emphasis is on ‘little’, meaning small and inexpensive. Gift wrap it or buy one of those little gift boxes to put it in. When you give it, say you saw it and thought he/she would like it, but add that if they don’t like it, they can throw it away or recycle it. In five years time there could be cupboards full of those little things, which have not been thrown out for fear of hurting your feelings. You can learn what your partner likes if you pay attention when she/he is talking (either to you or to friends) and when you are shopping (comments such as "Do you like that?" or "Isn’t that cute!" or "That’s nice!" will tip you off), or if they pause to look at something.

* Train yourself to notice new or different things about your partner. There is nothing worse than, for instance, wearing a new item of clothing or shoes, or having a new hair style, and not having it noticed. Observation is an art that can be fine tuned with practise.

* Buy some candles for a candle lit dinner.

* If your partner does the cooking, it is fair exchange for you to do the washing up. On a similar vein, if they do the ironing, you can do the washing (or vice versa).

* See romantic and ‘feel good’ movies.

* Give a foot massage, a leg massage, a back massage or a full massage. If you haven’t been trained in the art of massage, don’t let that hold you back. Don’t use too much pressure, and move your hands slowly. In the cold weather, put the bottle of massage oil in a pocket for ten minutes so it warms to body temperature. Rub your hands vigorously together to warm them up before placing them on your partner. Check with your partner from time to time to establish whether they would like a firmer or lighter touch, whether they would like you to concentrate in an area where their muscles may be stiff (for example, shoulders and upper back). There is a large variety of massage oils available from health food shops. Be aware that the oil can stain clothes, sheets, etc. Seek out a large, inexpensive towel from Targé or similar, to lie on and catch the odd drop of oil. It’s preferable not to use the non staining baby oil, as it is an antagonist to vitamin A in the body. One candlepower lighting is about right, and a relaxing tape helps.

* Accentuate the positive. Listen to the words you use, and make a decision to eliminate as many negative ones you can. (Negative statements can cause negative attitudes and negative
reactions). You will soon become an expert at phrasing your statements in a positive way (Don’t forget phrases like "No worries!", which contains two negative words). This will create a more pleasant atmosphere.

* It was Lenny Bruce who said, There are never enough ‘I love yous’. For some people, saying “I love you” feels awkward. The good news is that the more often it is said, the easier it is to say, and it soon changes from awkward to joyful. Practise, practise, practise! If there is a reluctance to vocalise it, write it on a card and post it, or leave it somewhere for your partner to find. WARNING! If there are other people in the house, make sure you put your partner’s name on it, otherwise you could find yourself in deep trouble!

* Write some poetry and give it to him/her.

* Buy a Far Side book of cartoons or similar, and laugh through them together.

* Turn a birthday or similar occasion into a treasure hunt. Make the first note easy to find, and leave clues on the note to find the next one. Make them easy so it’s fun, about 6 notes should be sufficient. Take photos or make a video of the hunt in process.

* When eating out, make it obvious you are looking at the other diners. Take your time. Then tell your partner in a sincere way that she/he is the most attractive/hansom person in the place.

* For Valentine’s Day, buy a number of cards and put a stamp on each envelope and address it to your partner (or have friends address them, or type them). Put each one in a larger envelope and send to friends in different towns and states. Ask the friend to drop the card in a mail box. When your partner receives the cards from all over the country they will be puzzled at first (it is traditional to send Valentine cards anonymously), but they will soon realise who sent them. However, they will be flattered by the trouble you have gone to.

* Have a picnic in the country (make sure you’re not sharing the paddock with a bull!).

* Hold hands often.

* Watch a sunrise/sunset together, and make a wish (it’s great if you’re on a deserted beach).

* Make every day a "Hug Day". Hugging is one of our must under rated past times. Ten hugs a day is not only good for the soul, but good for our health as well.

* Wash his/her car.

* Regularly tell your partner they look great, use praise often, support what ever they do (even if you are not all that keen on it), tell them you like the way they do this or that.

* If your partner is having a shower, try to avoid using water e.g., don’t flush the toilet, do the washing up, or use the washing machine, until after they have finished.

Any other suggestions will be gratefully accepted and posted the next time the site is upgraded.

KIND THINGS TO DO . . . as a parent

Parenthood carries a high degree of responsibility, and it is virtually a lifetime job (even after
they leave home). Yet there are parents who have a very casual approach to raising a family. There is an expression about people behaving ‘like animals’, which is a great disservice to the animal kingdom. People don’t behave like animals, they behave like people. If we were to raise our children like animals raised their young, for instance, like the ape family raised their young, the children would be raised in a loving and safe environment.

All adults need to be on their best behaviour when children are present. Children look to adults as role models, and pattern their behaviour on what they observe adults doing. For instance, if as a pedestrian you have a penchant for ignoring ‘don’t walk’ signs at traffic lights, refrain from this behaviour when children are present. They may feel that if it’s OK for you to do it, then it’s OK for them, too. If your level of politeness tends to vary, be on your best behaviour when children are near by. If you have a tendency to drive carelessly, an effort needs to be made to drive more carefully when there are children in the car. By doing such things you will not only be setting a good example for the young people in your immediate vicinity, you will be redefining your attitudes and actions in a positive way, and becoming a better person as a result.

What kind of a world would you like your child to grow up into? If you don’t contribute in any way to creating that kind of world, what statement does that make about you, as a parent? Carol Pearson wrote in The Hero Within, The truth is, these are not the times for the great man or woman to save us; these are the times for each of us to do his or her own part. Don’t expect someone else to do it for you – it may never happen!

A quotation on raising a family goes as follows: "The Golden Rule in raising a family is, treat your children the same way you would like others to treat them."

The following are some ways in which parents can impart kind attitudes on their children by teaching by example.

* Once again, the importance of listening is stressed. When your children come to you to talk about something, resist the temptation to jump in and give advice before they have finished. If you listen carefully and don’t interrupt, you could become more aware of the pressures effecting young people today. If you don’t listen carefully, there is a possibility they may stop talking to you. As we all know, talking to someone who doesn’t have our full attention is a frustrating experience. Author Judy Blume tells us, "Listen carefully. Every kid who’s ever written to me longs for the same thing: parental support, encouragement, and acceptance." It would probably be a good idea to make a few signs and post them around the house with the words, "Listen, support, encourage, accept". In fact, these signs could be placed anywhere, for they are guiding principles for dealing with anyone. When ever your child comes to you for advice, stop whatever you are doing and give him/her your undivided attention. If this is not convenient, work out a time that is suitable for both of you, and preferably within the next hour or two. Of course, you must ALWAYS honour the agreement, otherwise you will be perceived as being unreliable, uncaring, and other words that will drive a wedge between you and your child.

* Seek to resolve problems in a calm and logical manner with children. Listen carefully to the why, what, where and how of your child’s conversation. Avoid snap decisions and instead carefully deliberate the pros and cons. If you need to think about it, or talk it over with someone else, explain this to the child. Always explain clearly what you have based your decision on, try
to have it seen as being a fair decision, and ask for feed back.

* Be your child's role model for kind behaviour.

* The following should be obvious to everyone, but we mention it regardless. Never, ever, verbally or physically abuse anyone in front of a young person. Besides being a traumatic experience for the child, it could give them the impression that all problems can be resolved in a similar manner. Stay cool!

* Be aware of your praise to criticise ratio. Studies have revealed it is heavily weighed towards criticism. The most recent study found that for every time a child was praised, they were criticised 17 times! (It was found that peer criticism was almost three times this figure). We are not suggesting that you refrain from criticising, but that there is a reasonable balance between the praise and criticism. While too little praise can inhibit a child's personality, too much can be detrimental as well. That may surprise you, but if a child is praised for every little thing they do, it is creating a reward system. When the child is in a situation where the reward system does not apply (such as virtually anywhere outside of the child's home), the child will experience feelings of helplessness, and perhaps anxiety. Thus, such a practice, which is intended to boost self esteem, will have the opposite effect.

* Check with your school to see if they have a nutrition policy which discourages the use of junk food. The Dept of Education has booklets on this.

* Young people need guidelines. Not too many, or they will consider home a jail. When guidelines are set, they need to be enforced. For instance, if TV is restricted to a certain number of hours per week, be sure you have a method of keeping track of the viewing time, otherwise it will become a farce. Perhaps it may be easier to allow viewing on certain nights only, which is easier to regulate. Perhaps the whole family could have one or two 'no TV' nights. Some parents rely on the TV as the sole means of keeping a child occupied. This is not a good practice as TV has a habit of changing camera angles and scenes rapidly. Once the child becomes accustomed to this rapid fire technique, they lapse easily into boredom in any other situation. It could also be why hyperactivity has taken a leap forward in recent years. If there is a specific bed time (and there should be), don't be swayed by an excuse to stay up later. If there is something on TV that they 'must' watch, offer to tape it for them (providing it is rated according to their age group). Parents also need to make an agreement between themselves not to be played off against each other by the children.

* Encourage kind behaviour and praise such behaviour when it is witnessed.

* Realise that young people are subjected to high levels of stress. There is the pressure of school - homework and exams, put downs by peers and teachers. There may also be a lack of literacy and numeracy skills, and bullying is common. They could have difficulty in coping with broken romances, and their maturing body is also a cause of concern and sometimes embarrassment to them. At home there are many factors - indifference to the young person's need for advice and guidance, there may be verbal or physical abuse, and possibly stress in the home (from lack of money, excessive hours at work, disharmony, and many others). Some young people have no sense of belonging in either their home or in the community – they can have the impression that adults are uncaring and at times hostile. This results in a feeling that they are outcasts of society, which promotes frustration and hopelessness. As adults we tend to forget the things we did when we were young that expressed our unique identity. Young people of every generation behave in such a manner, it's part of the process of evolving. Our past society was more forgiving of such acts – why are we less tolerant? Young people are getting a bad deal, and sometimes they react to this with low level violence such as coarse language,
bumping into pedestrians, and graffiti. Just imagine the positive effect it would have on young people if the majority of adults were to smile and say "Hi" to any young person encountered, and occasionally stopped to have a short chat.

* It is normal for children to have a room that resembles a pig’s sty. Don’t concern yourself about it, let them have that space so they can express themselves any way they wish. In return you can ask that in any other room of the house, they need to behave like any other person who uses the area.
* Have some involvement in your child’s school, and establish a contact with a teacher or teachers so you can keep check of your child’s progress.
* Contact your school either as an individual or through the P&C movement, and suggest some form of kindness nurturing procedure be adopted by the school. This can be by way of a quotation with a kindness theme to start the day, or a brief account by the teacher or a member of the class of an act of kindness, or how kindness can empower people, or what positive effect kindness would have on the community, or the creation of a poem, or a painting by individuals or the whole class depicting kindness.
* Be an avid listener when your child is talking about school, you can pick up valuable information. For instance, there may be a problem with a teacher or peer, or your child could be a victim of bullying. If this is so, talk to a teacher, and familiarise yourself with what procedures your child could adopt. Ask your school if they have a anti bullying program. If you discover that your child is a bully, beware! Statistics gathered in the U.S. reveal that if schoolyard bullies do not have counselling, about half of them will end up in prison as adults.
* If you promise your child something, always follow through. If you say you will be at the sports carnival, be there! A sure way to break a child’s heart is to break your promises. The same applies to any promise you make. You may in future need to think first before opening your mouth. It’s worth it, as being dependable is considered a great asset!
* Couples need the occasional break from being parents. Leave your children in the care of someone you can trust, and go off together for a weekend every few months.
* If your child has been diagnosed as having attention deficit disorder (ADD), seek another opinion. The Australian Medical Association admits thousands of children have been wrongly diagnosed with ADD, and are taking unnecessary mind altering drugs. The use of these mind altering drugs is becoming so widespread that it is a not an uncommon sight in schools to see children lining up in a ‘drug queue’, waiting for their dose to be handed out.
* Do you have a child in a ballet, tap or other class where assessments are carried out and parents are invited to come along? If there are always spare seats, suggest to the organisers that such seats be made available to interested seniors and nursing home residents.

KIND THINGS TO DO . . . as a teacher
Teachers are not unfamiliar with kindness. In fact, their profession is based on kindness and caring just as much as it is on teaching. A teacher, by using praise, and by rewarding positive behaviour, is able to foster and maintain children’s interest. This behaviour also develops the child’s creativity and self worth. As written by former first lady Rosalynn Carter in the foreword to Kid’s Random Acts of Kindness (Conari Press), “Simple acts of kindness are natural to children, but it is a quality that is fragile and easily crushed if not respected, nurtured and appreciated." Teachers make an effort to respect, nurture and appreciate their pupil’s kindness response. Some of the ways they do this around the world is as follows.

If you are aware of other ways teachers use kindness, we would be grateful to learn of these so we can add them to the list.

* If you click on this heading - Kindness Certificate - you will be able to see (and download, if you wish) the certificate created in Canada, by teachers, to acknowledge the kindness of their students.
* If you click on this heading - School and Kindness – you will read about an exciting new program that links schools around the world by e-mail.
* Encourage community responsibility in the playground. These can be in the form of helping other children, reporting bullying behaviour, picking up litter, cleaning graffiti, reporting suspicious looking people, a food or clothing drive for underprivileged or homeless people (which could be passed on to one of the community service organisations).
* Students could be asked to tell stories about an act of kindness carried out by or to themselves, or his/her family or friends.
* Students could be asked to give written examples of acts of kindness, or create a painting depicting kindness, or write poetry or prose with a kindness theme. Banks, community centres, senior citizen’s centres, and other organisations will sometimes display this material on their premises.
* Students could be asked to give their ideas about why kindness can develop self worth, make people feel good, promote better health, help with a case of ‘the blues’, and so on. We have a six page paper on the health aspects of kindness, available free of charge.
* Students could be asked to write a short essay (preferably with the assistance of parents) on how kindness could help make their community more friendly.
* Examples could be sought as to how kindness could help – children; home and work environments; the elderly; the handicapped; reduce the level of crime; and so on. This could be a singular or group effort.
* A class or the whole school could become involved in helping the local community, for example, by visiting a local nursing home, cleaning up the local park, a food and clothing drive for needy people, adopting an anonymous needy family in the area, and so on. The media may be interested in covering such activities.
* The class could create and distribute greeting cards for people in nursing homes, hospitals, etc for special days such as Easter, Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, Kindness Day and other appropriate days.
* Students could be encouraged to carry out acts of kindness to each other, such as ‘adopting’ a new pupil, sharing lunch, cheering up a dejected play mate, etc.
* Teachers could make up self adhesive ‘Caught you being kind’ or ‘I’m a Kindness Kid’ badges, and attach them to anyone seen carrying out a kind act. This applies to both pupils and
staff. Sheets of self-adhesive circles (12 per sheet, fluoro colours available) and rectangles are available at stationery shops.

* Each person in the class can be given a sheet of paper with the names of all the children in the class. The students would then write a few kind words about each person, including themselves. The sheets are then handed back to the teacher, who at some time within the next few days or weeks, cuts them into strips. The strips for each name are placed in an envelope with that person’s name written on it. The comments should be checked just in case someone puts in a ‘nasty.’ At the end of one of the ensuing days they can be handed to the pupils, who are told not open them until they reach home. This exercise promotes a feeling of self worth in the pupils when they read the positive comments their class mates have made about them. In some instances it has eliminated disruptive practices used by certain children.

* Something similar to the above, but the teacher writes a few kind words about the pupil on a piece of paper. Such pieces of paper have been known to have been carried in a wallet for many years after the student received them. This exercise not only enhances self worth in the recipient, it also creates fond memories of the teacher.

* Be a role model for kindness, encourage the practise of kindness, and reward kind behaviour when it is witnessed, by praise and other positive comments.

* With pre schoolers or year one students, check to ensure the children realise what kindness involves, and why it is considered a positive and desirable response.

* In any books that are being used in class, the question could be asked of how a kind response to a certain situation might have changed the outcome to a more positive one.

* The library could be encouraged to make a list of any books with a kind theme.

Please send your ideas to us so we can add them to the list.

KIND THINGS TO DO . . . as a young person

This section deals with all age groups, so there will be some that apply to certain age groups, while others may not.

* Just as young people need their kindness respected, nurtured and appreciated, so too do adults. Acknowledge acts of kindness carried out by parents, teachers, bus drivers and other adults. It needs to be realised that some adults have difficulty accepting praise. This can be because they haven’t had a great deal of praise in their lifetime, and they haven’t worked out how to handle it. Therefore, don’t be disappointed if the person doesn’t appear to acknowledge your praise. It may be that they are a little embarrassed by it. Be kind without any expecting any particular response. By using praise and encouragement when someone does something that is helpful or kind, you will be helping to make your community friendlier.

* When young people get together, either at school or socially, it seems the accepted thing is to ‘knock’ or ‘put down’ one another, to criticise or make fun of each other. In studies it has been
found this practise can be taken to extremes, with a frequency of thirty or more put downs for every time a person is praised. Even a ratio of 5:1 can have a long term negative effect on self worth. It would be really good if you could persuade your group of friends to use more praise in their conversation. If the members of your group get along well together, it makes more sense to acknowledge the good in the members of the group rather than their shortcomings. There may be an initial period where members feel a little awkward about the praise because they are not used to it. But if there is an emphasis on praise and the worth of the people in your group, you will begin to feel better about yourselves. There will be other benefits from doing this, such as better grades at school because of a greater feeling of confidence. If the practise of complimenting is expanded, it will bring positive results wherever you go, and you will find that people have a greater respect for you.

* One thing that you should always have a degree of discomfort about is the use of coarse language. Many years ago, coarse language was used very sparingly, and because of this sparseness, when it was used it created a reaction of shock to those within hearing range. Thus, when a person felt a great injustice had been carried out, and they used a ‘swear word’ (or ‘bad language’ or a ‘profanity’, as they were called then), the user had the satisfaction of knowing that their point had been made. In our modern society, coarse language is used so often that it no longer has the effect of shock, and as such it has become pointless. One way to bring back its usefulness, if that is an appropriate word to use, is to refrain from using coarse language except in the most trying circumstances. How can this be a ‘kindness’, you might be thinking. Perhaps coarse language can never be totally condoned, but its common use and acceptance in society means it has reached a stage where it cannot be eliminated. Hopefully, it can be restricted, and with this restriction comes power, because the less it is used, the more powerful the reaction to it becomes. If you are able to totally abstain from using coarse language, then you are truly a hero and a wonderful example to those around you.

* Some young people feel they are getting a bad deal, which is generally true. But bear in mind that in most cases young people have shelter, food and clothing, and varying degrees of love and caring from their parents. Parents have some heavy responsibilities, one of which is finding the money to raise their children. While you can always find something to criticise, criticism will usually provoke criticism in return. Just like the boomerang, whatever you put out there will come back to you. If you are unhappy about something, think it out before raising it with a parent. Try to find some common ground where there is agreement, and from there move on to the area of your concern. For instance, “Dad, you know how you are always telling me how I should read more books?” Wait for the ‘yes’ response. “Do you really mean that?” Again, wait for the yes response. “Well if you could increase my allowance I could afford to buy some books to read.” There may be a comment that there are many books in the house that you could read. Explain how different generations like different books. You may get a comment from your parents about the ‘junk music’ you play. Parents will normally only think of your music as noise. Tell them you would really like to explain about young people’s music. Sit them down and put on one of your tapes or CDs, but at a reasonable volume. Explain the story the piece of music is telling. You might like to push the pause button occasionally, tell part of the story, and play some more of the music (avoid music that mentions death, drugs, and so on). If you can get your parent/s to sit and listen, then they will probably be impressed by your effort to give them an insight into the music you like. Any time you need to ask for something or seek agreement, think it out before hand. Don’t use slang that your parents may not understand, and don’t talk too quickly. Pick the right time. Don’t bring it up just before or during one of their favourite TV
shows. Wait for a time when they appear relaxed and in a good mood. The art of negotiation is in avoiding confrontation. Borrow a book from the library on negotiation, study it and use the methods. These will help you throughout the rest of your life. We plan to write something for this site on simple negotiating techniques for young people,

* These days many parents appear to be busy much of the time, and it is acknowledged amongst many young people that there are few opportunities to talk about things of importance with their parents. It sounds silly, but you may have to make an appointment with your parents to discuss something at length. If you do this, study your parents behaviour beforehand and establish a time of day when they are usually relaxed. Try to avoid asking for something if your parent has a slumped posture – the response will almost invariably be negative. If there is something you wish to talk about, and your parents don’t have the time, think about who you have a good relationship with. Perhaps a grandparent or other relative, or check at the front of the White Pages under the Hotlines section of Community Help for Young People page. A ‘Hotline’ doesn’t mean you have to have a life threatening situation, they deal with day to day matters as well. However, if the matter isn’t serious, avoid contacting any number where ‘crisis’ is mentioned.

* Involve yourself in community programs, such as joining a group of young people who visit retirement homes and talk with and read to the senior citizens there, or write letters for any of the residents who are unable to do so themselves. The group may also do odd jobs and run messages. Unlike parents, seniors have the time to talk, and it may not be too difficult for you to find someone who will act as a mentor (someone who can guide you who is wise in the ways of the world, or who will take up the cause for young people in your area, or who will listen to your problems and perhaps offer some advice).

* Check out the Scouting Association, Police and Community Youth Clubs, and other such organisations that have character building programs. This may provoke some put downs from your friends, but remember that you run your life, and not your friends.

* At school, the following can be part of your kindness commitment.

a. Everyone has ‘special friends’ at school, but don’t forget to be friendly toward all the students.

b. If you see someone in trouble, help them. They may have fallen over, they may be being teased, or bullied, or stuck in a tree. If you can’t help them, go and find someone who can.

c. When someone new comes to school, volunteer to show them around, introduce them to as many people as you can, make them feel ‘at home.’ Tell them they can be part of your group on a temporary basis, until they find their own group. If they catch a bus home, make sure they catch the correct bus.

d. If someone forgets to bring their lunch, offer to share your lunch with them.

e. You might like to form a kindness group, where the members agree to do things such as refrain from teasing people about being fat, being from another race, or about the clothes they wear. Members might agree not to make comments such as, "You’re not my friend any more!" or "I hate you!", and other similar remarks. Member’s attitudes could be to treat people exactly as the members would like to be treated.
f. Set a good example to other students. Be as pleasant and well mannered as you can to fellow students, teachers, the lolly pop lady, the school bus driver, and so on. Always have a smile and a kind word for everyone.

g. Help people in class. This could be helping someone work out a problem they are having trouble with, if the teacher is busy. Or it could be lending your ruler, eraser, pencil, etc. to someone.

h. Try not to say or do anything that might hurt someone’s feelings.

i. Try very hard not to become involved in a fight.

j. If you are participating in a team sport, always remember that you are part of a team. Even if you are the best player in the team, do whatever you have to do to support the team. You can show off your skills and be the best player you possibly can be, but you need to keep passing the ball, or whatever is involved in the game, so you can all win together.

Please send your ideas about being kind so we can add them to the list.

KIND THINGS TO DO . . . as a motorist/pedestrian

* Whatever you are doing, whether it’s driving a car, crossing the street, giving directions, buying a gift for someone, negotiating a $1 million contract, the application of a little common sense will ensure a more favourable outcome for all concerned. Whatever you do, it should always be for the benefit of all. If you drive with care, courtesy and common sense, you will be setting a wonderful example, have less accidents, speeding fines, ulcers, and heart attacks.
* At times there are large gaps between parked cars. Sometimes there’s not much that can be done about this, but if you are parking at either end of a parking zone, you can make sure that either the rear or the front of the car is in line with the parking sign. Or even be a little past the sign, for you will not be booked if your vehicle is protruding a few centimetres beyond the marker. It is not uncommon to see a gap of one or two metres between the car and the sign. If this happens at both ends of the zone, it could be preventing one more car from parking in the zone.
* As a pedestrian, whenever a driver stops for you, even if you are at a pedestrian crossing, it costs nothing to give a cheery wave. If you check the traffic before using a pedestrian crossing, it only takes a few seconds to step back to allow a lone vehicle to pass before you cross.
* When driving, acknowledge drivers who allow you to merge with the traffic, or enter from a side street, and those who stop for you at roundabouts and stop signs (even though they are obliged by law to do so). Each time you acknowledge good driving behaviour, you are encouraging the driver to keep doing it. When you wave your thanks, make it an enthusiastic
wave. Such waves will at times result in a small wave back, indicating a "That's OK" or "It's my pleasure" response.

* We hear stories about road rage on a regular basis. To reduce the possibility of being the victim of a road rage incident, don't do anything silly whilst driving. Some motorists fail to realise that in many instances the hostility is caused by the so called 'victim' doing something wrong. For example, pushing in from a side street, failing to use the indicators, dawdling, changing lanes when there is insufficient room (i.e., cutting someone off), crossing an unbroken line, double parking, driving too close to the vehicle in front (tailgating), throwing a cigarette butt or other refuse out of the car window, and so on. For those who wish to check the road rules (new rules are introduced from time to time that we may be unaware of), a booklet describing the rules can be obtained at any motor registry office. Next time you renew your registration or licence, take one from the rack. For anyone finding themselves a victim of road rage, ignore it completely. If you react, the rage will only escalate. The best policy is to pretend you are blissfully unaware of what is going on. If the rager won't go away, drive to a police station if you know the location of one. If the traffic stops, make sure the windows are closed and the doors locked to prevent a particularly aggressive person from assaulting you.

* Pay the toll of the motorist behind you.

* If the road is wet, do your best not to splash pedestrians by either avoiding puddles or slowing down as you drive through them. Also be aware that tyre adhesion may be sacrificed when roads are wet, so take precautions in relation to extended stopping distances and less grip when cornering.
* If you drive by a person struggling with a heavy parcel, or shopping, stop and offer to give them a lift home.

* Alert drivers if you notice something amiss with their vehicle – a flat tyre, unsecured boot or door, broken/inactive blinkers or lights, and if it’s dark, that their headlights are not on.
* Flash your lights at oncoming traffic to alert them of an accident or some other source of danger.
* Stop to assist somebody who’s had an accident or broken down. When assisting, stay alert, and do not stand in front of or behind stationary vehicles, in case they are struck by another vehicle. Several people who have stopped to render assistance have been killed in this way. Make a quick assessment of the situation in relation to your safety before stopping. Never forget to use common sense.

* In careless or inexperienced hands, a motor vehicle can become a weapon of destruction. It can destroy property and it can destroy lives. In virtually all instances this destruction is unintended – police reports are full of the phrase "I didn’t mean to do it!". Think ahead to establish the negative impact of inappropriate driving behaviour.
* Try to avoid blowing the horn when leaving a friend’s house, or when driving past where a friend lives. It serves very little purpose, and it’s annoying for the neighbours.
* Always do your best to stay alert and conscious.

* Watch where you are going. Don’t endanger people’s lives by looking at the passenger as you talk to them; don’t eat or drink while driving; obey the law and refrain from using a mobile phone when the car is moving. A lack of concentration and being easily distracted are obviously the cause of many accidents.
* Avoid thinking, "It won't happen to me."
* If you pull up beside a learner driver, wave and tell them they are doing a great job. This will boost their self esteem and help to improve their driving.

Please send us your ideas on ways of being kind, and we will add them to our lists.

KIND THINGS TO DO . . . for seniors

* When in a queue, at a bus stop, in a mall, and so on, and there is a senior standing close by, start up a conversation. Seniors are usually very easy to engage in conversation, and normally have a wide range of topics they like to talk about.
* If there are any seniors in your street or unit block, make yourself known to them and offer to do small odd jobs. Ensure you make it clear that you are only able to do the occasional small job, and be wary of trying to fix electrical or plumbing faults, which would be illegal (unless you are an electrician or plumber) and possibly dangerous. As age increases, it becomes difficult for some people to do small things like changing a light globe. Leave your name and number with them so they can take advantage of your kind offer. By reinforcing this trend, when you reach a ripe old age it will ensure you have help from the community.
* If you see a senior struggling with a heavy parcel, offer assistance.
* Check with your local Senior Citizen’s Centre to establish if they would like any books or magazines you have at home that aren’t being used.
* If there is a senior living nearby, call in from time to tome and ask if everything is OK. If you have any children, take them along occasionally, the senior will more than likely enjoy having a brief chat with them.

KIND THINGS TO DO . . . at work

* Have a photo of your family, and outdoor scenes such as a landscape, sun set, surf or similar pictures that have a calming effect on you, displayed at your work station. Take regular breaks from your work to gaze at these for ten or twenty seconds. It will help to create a balance in your work day, which will lower stress levels and maintain your efficiency.
* Refrain from long personal telephone conversations, non-business use of the Net without
asking permission, extended time at the coffee machine, and other practices that deprive your employer of time you are being paid for. Such practices unfortunately seem to be common these days. If I am engaged in such practices it can be just as bad as stealing property from an employer, because what I am doing is stealing time from my employer. Why do people do such things? It can be that the employer is perceived as a slave driver or cheapskate, and such behaviour is felt as justified by the employee. If this is my reason, then I am degrading any ethics I might have. In other words, I am bringing myself down to the level of my employer. If my boss is a sleaze and I bring myself down to his level, then what does that make me? When laziness, petty theft, and other anti-work behaviour is displayed, for whatever the reason, I am corrupting both my principles and my spirituality. If I can justify sending personal e-mail at work without seeking permission, then I can find it easy to justify other behaviour as time goes on. It becomes easy for me to lie about why I have to knock off early, or take a day off. It also becomes easy for me to justify stealing property from my employer. I can set myself up as a martyr and think of what I am doing as ‘justice.’ Alarming, isn’t it!

* Give your boss and your clients more than they expect, and do it cheerfully.
* If a business associate seems to be preoccupied, ask if you can help with anything. If the answer is vague, ask if they are OK. You might also like to make them a cup of coffee or tea.

KIND THINGS TO DO . . . at home

* A loving atmosphere in the home is most important, even if there is only one other person living there. Do what you can to promote a tranquil, harmonious atmosphere in the home.
* You may like to consider having a ‘no-TV’ day or days. These days can be used to read, talk to the family, eat at a table, meditate, or whatever you never have time to do.
* Do you have house rules? It helps to have some basic rules, particularly where young people are concerned. These can be simple things like a roster for washing or wiping up, putting things back where you find them, placing a new toilet roll nearby if the old one is soon going to be depleted, letting someone know if the milk, coffee, breakfast cereal, etc. is about to run out, who puts out the rubbish bin, and so on. For young people, the bed time should be clear and upheld, and that home work is to be completed, and if they have trouble with it, to ask for help. They are to be encouraged to advise you if they having trouble with their work at school, if they are being bullied, if there is a problem with a teacher. If everything a young person tells their parent is treated with respect and is thoughtfully talked over, the child will continue to confide in the parent/s. If a drama is created every time some little problem occurs, the child can’t be blamed for failing to pass on something that will create a negative response. We are not advocating that bad behaviour be ignored, but it should be treated in a calm and constructive way. Thus the problem will be solved, and if guidelines are given on how to handle such a thing in the future, it shouldn’t happen again.
* Always, always, make time to talk with your children. When this happens, it involves listening. No matter how busy you are, you must listen carefully to what your children tell you. It can be
done. The late Robert Holmes á Court was a very busy businessman, but was always attentive to his children, always interrupted what he was doing to listen to them.
* In a conversation with anyone in the home, listen. If you are not sure of something, tell it as you understand it, and ask for validation.
* Seek consensus from everyone in the house on decisions that will effect those in the house.

KIND THINGS TO DO . . . as a shopper

* At the supermarket, be careful where you park your trolley. It is inconvenient for other shoppers if your trolley is blocking the isle while you scan the shelves. Blocking can mean leaving it in the middle of the isle, or parking it parrel with another trolley. It’s not too hard to use a little common sense. It has been known that irate shoppers will crash their trolley into another that is blocking the aisle, and hash words have been exchanged. To our knowledge there have been no punch ups as a result of ‘supermarket rage’, but it could happen!
* If you come upon an item that has fallen on the floor, pick it up and put it back on the shelf.

* When you are unloading your groceries at the supermarket counter, turn the bar codes so they face the scanner.

* Greet the check out person with a smile, address then by their name (most wear a name tag) and have a short chat with them. While the majority manage to maintain a happy attitude, if you are unlucky enough to encounter one whose attitude is bordering on rudeness, ask them, "Are you always like this, or are you having a bad day?"
* If you see a shopper struggling to reach an item on a high shelf, offer to fetch it for them.
* When you have finished shopping, always try to leave the trolley as close as you can to the point where you picked it up.
* Always thank sales people for their help, regardless of the fact that they are paid to do this. If you can make a positive comment about their appearance or manner, do this, too.
* If you value your health, it may pay you to scan the list of ingredients on each item you intend to buy, to check for sugar, preservatives, colouring, flavouring, fat, and so on. It takes a little time, and you may need your glasses, but it could be very revealing.
* Try to make eye contact with everyone you meet, and if you do, nod and smile. When waiting in the queue, have a short chat with someone in front or behind you. Supermarkets are ideal if you would like to improve your social communication skills.
* If you have trouble finding an item or a section in a supermarket or department store, always precede your question to staff with a "Excuse me" or a "Can you help me please."

The last four sections are recent additions, which is why they are rather brief. If you have any
suggestions as to what could be added to these, we would be grateful to hear from you.