

# How to be happier: Help out a friend!

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**Humankind:** According to Dutch writer and historian Rutger Bregman, humans are hardwired for kindness. Despite often being called a selfish species, we have, he argues, evolved to work together rather than to compete.

Should we all do more random acts of kindness? Favours, presents, compliments — research suggests that giving to other people is the best way to find contentment.

## What's happening?

According to scientists, spending time, money and effort on other people gives us more joy than spending it on ourselves. So, to mark **Random Acts of Kindness Day**, we look at some small acts of generosity.

## Find out more

**Compliment a friend.** Studies show that giving compliments is a quick, easy, and cost-free way of improving everyone's mood.

**Smile at a stranger.** This makes people happier, even if it is a fake smile.

**Give a small gift.** This brings joy to both giver and receiver.

**Send thank-you notes.** Research shows that receiving thank-you notes makes people feel very happy.

**Do someone a favour.** According to one study, scans reveal that performing favours is really good for us.

**More hugs!** Studies have shown that cuddles can lower blood pressure and heart rate.

According to the Dalai Lama, the **spiritual** leader of Tibetan **Buddhism**, thinking in a kind way is good for you. Generous people are generally happier, healthier, more popular and more successful.

## Should we all do more random acts of kindness?

### Some say

Yes! There are so many small ways of being kind, and most of them benefit our own mood too.

### Others think

No! Kindness is often a sign of privilege: you have to have time and money to be kind.

**Or...** The Dalai Lama teaches "wise selfishness". This means that people can achieve their own goals.

## Some people say

*“Carry out a random act of kindness, with no expectation of reward, safe in the knowledge that one day someone might do the same for you.”*

**Princess Diana (1961 – 1997), British royal**

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*What do you think?*

### 1. Connect

**How do you feel about this story?** - When was the last time you performed a random act of kindness? How did it make you feel?

### 2. Wonder

**What questions do you have?** - For example: Can being kind help make us healthier?

### 3. Investigate

**What are the facts?** - An average child smiles or laughs 400 times per day. An average adult smiles or laughs 20 times per day. Find out what you can about this claim.

### 4. Construct

**What is your point of view?** - Do you think that people's level of generosity is fixed, or does it depends on how much money they have? Write a short speech arguing your point of view.

### 5. Express

**What do others believe?** - In groups, come up with three ideas for projects or exercises that would help to teach people to be kinder. Then present your ideas to the rest of the class.

### 6. Reflect

**What might happen next?** - Imagine a world where people were only kind or generous if they got something in return. Write a story about what it is like to live in this transactional world.

## Glossary

**Random Acts of Kindness Day** - A day dedicated to encouraging people to perform small, unexpected acts of kindness for others, without expecting anything in return, with the goal of spreading positivity and making the world a better place; it is celebrated annually on 17 February.

**Spiritual** - Relating to or affecting the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things.

**Buddhism** - A religion of eastern and central Asia. It began with the teaching of Siddhartha Gautama on suffering.