



2024

## Kindness Essay Contest

In collaboration with Harmony School of Science – Middle/High in El Paso, TX

*The Ripple Effect of Kindness: Strategies for a Kinder World*

We are pleased to announce our 2024 winners:

### **6<sup>th</sup> Grade**

Hailey Peterson

Miranda Gamez-Valles

### **7<sup>th</sup> Grade**

Kamila Sanchez

Eva Waldon

### **8<sup>th</sup> Grade**

Kailey Dalton Tenorio

Shamsyath Malame-Soule

### **9<sup>th</sup> Grade**

Alizae Custodio

Kenji Jaimes-Tsurutaka

# Showing kindness

Hailey Peterson

Kindness is a fundamental aspect of a human interaction, serving as a powerful force that can transform relationships and communities. It is the simple yet profound act of extending compassion, understanding, and goodwill towards others. When individuals embrace kindness. They contribute to a harmonious and positive societal fabric.

One way to exhibit kindness is through empathetic listening. Taking the time to utterly understand someone's thoughts and feelings demonstrates a genuine concern for their well-being. This empathetic connection fosters trust and strengthens interpersonal bonds, creating a supportive environment where individuals feel valued and heard.

Another avenue for kindness is the practice of random acts of generosity. Whether it is holding the door open for a stranger, offering a kind word to a classmate, or volunteering time to help those in need, these small gestures have the potential to make a significant impact. The ripple effect of such acts can inspire others to pay it forward, creating a chain reaction of positivity.

Kindness also plays a crucial role in conflict resolution. Approaching disagreements with a compassionate and understanding mindset can lead to more constructive conversations. Instead of escalating tensions, Kindness paves the way for compromise and collaboration, fostering a culture of cooperation and unity.

Furthermore, kindness extends beyond individual interactions to encompass community initiatives. Engaging in volunteer work, supporting charitable causes, and participating in acts of service contribute to the betterment of society. These collective efforts create a sense of shared responsibility and solidarity, reinforcing the notion that kindness can be a driving force for positive societal change.

In conclusion, showing kindness is not just a positive gesture; it is a transformative and enduring quality that has the power to shape individual lives and entire communities. By embracing kindness in our daily interactions, we contribute to the creation of a more compassionate and empathetic world, where understanding and goodwill prevail.

# Kindness

Miranda Gamez-Valles

Kindness is something slowly ripping away from our community and society. It has been drifting away like a leaf pushed by wind. It has been lost between hatred, jealousy, and overall ignorance. But, our community can still flourish with kindness, and respect. Kindness not only helps others, but it helps you too. Kindness should be spread all around the world to better our lives and communities.

Spreading kindness is something you could do in your everyday life, small or big acts of kindness can make someone's day easily. Small acts like opening the door for someone. Greeting them even if they are strangers. Not littering, and being respectful. Even sharing. Are things that can make someone happy, not only them but you too. After all kindness is like a flower and we are the bees that distribute its rich and magnificent pollen. To go more into detail, if someone by any chance is having a hard time, or a bad day. You can be kind and show respect even if they're older or younger. Kindness has no limits.

There are other ways to show kindness, you can always do bigger acts of kindness. For example you can donate to charity. Feed the homeless. Volunteer in your free time. Give people gifts, and help out in your community! These big acts of kindness can't only make someone's day, but they can maybe remember you as the kind of person that the world should be like. Kindness is beautiful no matter how it comes, the meaning, or the package. Sometimes it's hard to believe that kindness can do that much ,but it can!

In the end, it doesn't matter how you express your kindness towards others. As long as you do, express it. Kindness is something that you should cherish. Remember kindness as things that are beautiful, like a flower, a butterfly, like you.



Kamila Sanchez

A great way to give back to people and give back to the world is to volunteer. I personally think volunteering is the best because there are many things you could do. For example volunteering at an animal shelter or at a food bank. Taking care of our planet is important but the first step in that direction is to take care of each other.

Not only does volunteering make a difference in the other peoples lives, it can also make you kinder and happier. Usually when people think of being kind they don't realize it all starts with you. Most people volunteer for college credits and achievements to add to their resume but they didn't realize that doing things for the world and to feel happier themselves is the most important part. In a research at Community Tech Network it states, "People who volunteer are happier than those who don't," which was proven in a recent study on hormones and brain activity. Studies have shown that people who volunteer and help people's mental health and wellbeing.

Being kind to other people is the first step to a kinder world. Imagine a world where everybody did something kind for one another a day. I believe it would have a domino effect. In social experiments they pay for someone's meal and usually the next person pays for another person's meal. It can make many people happier even if it is just for a few minutes. In other words, always offer an act of kindness no matter how big or small.

Volunteering can help out other people and foster a kind environment. We can put smiles on other peoples faces by simply giving them spare change or helping tutor younger kids. A way of spreading kindness is by starting an act of kindness so people can be influenced to help others and help our planet.

# Spreading Kindness

Eva Waldon

Have you ever been bullied? Have you ever been lonely or had a hard day? If the answer is yes, then wouldn't you have liked something to help you out? Jackie Chan said "Sometimes it takes only one act of kindness and caring to change a person's life". This shows the impact that kindness can have on many people's lives and why people need to spread kindness. Kindness is not spread as much as it should be, but some people simply don't know how to, and I want to help them. This paper is meant to teach people ways to help and spread kindness around you.

Give people compliments, it helps. Many people are self conscious about their appearance whether it's their bodies, clothes, or hair. Studies have shown that giving compliments can improve people's days and moods, helping them with their confidence, and I speak from experience as well. I was having a bad day and was feeling bad. I had gotten a bad grade, I had gotten into a fight with a friend, and had forgotten my gym clothes. I was walking to my next class when I received a compliment about a project I had done. For whatever reason, the compliment helped me feel better and changed my mindset for that day entirely. Compliments go a long way, even if they're small, showing just how much they can help someone and how much compliments can do for someone.

Try being there for someone who needs support. People get upset due to all kinds of things, and they need support. You can support them by giving them a hug, taking them somewhere they enjoy, buying them a gift, talking about what happened, letting them talk as you listen, or just letting them be. Different people need to be comforted/supported in different ways, and it's important to understand what they need, even if you think there are better options. Being a shoulder to cry on or someone to talk to in a time of need is a very important part of being kind, and being there for them can mean the world to them.

Try to be forgiving. No one is perfect. Everyone is human, and all humans make mistakes and learn from them. Studies have shown that people who have been abused, experienced traumatic situations, or mistreated have developed bullying behavior, showing that many bullies usually deserve a second chance. Even though it is the kind thing to do, I do want to say that you do not have to forgive your bullies or present them with a second chance, as that is your decision



and you are not obligated to forgive them, especially if they have harmed you seriously in any kind of way. Many people (bullies or not) deserve a second chance, and giving them one would be a kind thing to do, but you are not obligated to.

In all, some good ways to be kind to people would be to give them people compliments, be there for someone who needs support, and be forgiving. All of these ways are good ways to help spread kindness, but that does not mean that these are the only things you can do. If you want to do more than research about things you can do in your community. Whether it's helping someone carry their groceries, donating to the charities, or volunteering at your school, any effort can help so many people and spread that kindness to others. Kindness is a very important thing, and needs to be spread and passed on, but every little thing can help.



## Kailey Dalton Tenorio

As the wise Aesop once said, "No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted." Kindness is a crucial aspect of our world, even though it may not always be displayed. Statistics show that only 16-30% of people actively show kindness, but it is still incredibly important in helping others. It is very easy to show kindness. I foster a culture of kindness by helping others in any situation because kindness benefits not only the person but you, helps peoples' self esteem, and makes them feel appreciated.

One powerful way to show kindness is through physical affection. When we show kindness and affection to others, it communicates to them that they are valued and important. It can also make us feel good when we see how our actions positively affect others. This can be a powerful tool in strengthening friendships and relationships. I can personally say that being hugged makes me feel a lot better when I'm feeling down.

Giving is another impactful way to show kindness. Whether it is giving money, gifts, or something we have made, the act of giving shows that we care about others and their happiness. From my personal experience, giving gifts to my best friend always brings her joy and makes her feel appreciated. Most people enjoy receiving gifts and it can be a great way to show how much we care for them.

According to the Mayo Clinic Health System, kindness has been proven to increase self-esteem, empathy, and compassion, and improve overall mood. Simple acts like giving compliments or smiling at others can have a huge impact on their self-esteem. It may seem like a small gesture, but it can make someone's day and spread positivity. This might even enlighten them more to kindness. I usually compliment my mom, and she always smiles and thanks me. She feels better in her outfits and makeup when I tell her it looks good on her.

In conclusion, kindness is something that can easily be incorporated into our daily lives. It doesn't have to be a grand gesture or cost anything to show kindness. I always try to foster kindness in my everyday life by simply gifting to, smiling at, and hugging people. It doesn't take much, and it can make a big difference. Kindness makes our environment a better place, and a more comfortable space.

## Shamsyath Malame-Soule

Have you ever heard the quote, “Every generation is better than the next?” If you’re young and hearing this, you may dust it off as some “boomer” trying to preach to you. If you’re older, you may see all of the innovations and information rapidly displayed and discovered in the past decade and think, “How?” Well, while it’s true that we do have technology like never before, none of this truly makes our generation memorable... regarding the social part. Today’s society is going through a crisis where we are greatly deprived of the one most important thing keeping us humans together; kindness. This simple culture which used to be spread among adults and children has been nearly destroyed, derided and mocked into near oblivion. Even then, it isn’t impossible to revive it like many believe. We’re not truly doomed. Humans have always had the abilities to foster a culture of kindness in their surroundings; we have just neglected these capabilities. And what are these capabilities exactly? How can we truly make kindness and giving great again for the next generations to come?

Starting off, while it’s impossible to wipe out the ability to feel anger in humans, we should try our best to control it in an orderly and rationalized manner. People today will do crazy rude things out of anger— whether that anger is because of a simple disagreement or a quarrel— but when disputes inevitably arise between people, they can be solved quicker and easier if both sides know how to turn their negative, bigoted feelings into open-minded, listening ones. We should strive to listen to the thoughts and feelings of others, to stray from selfishness and insensitivity, so we can see past our differences and result in great compromises. We don’t have to all be friends, but we definitely shouldn’t all be enemies.

If you end up hurting someone, don’t fight back that natural feeling of remorse. If someone likes something you don’t find interest in, simply learn to let people have their fun while you have your own doing what you like. Learn to think about others, don’t put your enjoyment over others’ feelings— in fact, to live in harmony doesn’t mean we all have to be the same; we can all live with and respect each other and our differences, maybe then we’d be able to invite everybody to our hard-earned paradises.





The moral here is that judging others for things like their looks, tendencies, abilities, even simply their unique points of view on the world should never be permanently normalized. Let's listen to each other, let's think about people before making recklessly rude decisions. With this, we can achieve kindness that can reach the future. We can live with each other in a genuine, free world.

# Peaceful Gardening

Alizae Custodio

There are multiple ways to make an environment a kinder place, especially for school students. For example, plants may be an efficient way to brighten up a school. Starting a garden in a school environment would more than likely make the kids be kinder to each other and perhaps even express themselves even more than before.

Having plants in a classroom has been proven to decrease stress and anxiety. In the article “Plants in the Classroom: Why you should consider it.” They mention how cortisol levels drop in their saliva in both educational and work environments when there are plants. Cortisol being the primary stress hormone produced, this states that the stress the cortisol levels produce, drop. When their stress decreases, the likelihood of students being rude or perhaps bullying, more than likely decreases as well, due to the fact that stress is a factor to bullying.

Students struggle on focusing during class or when studying. With plants, though, it's been proven that they help you concentrate more. According to the article, “Plants and how they can help you study,” they mention how research shows that indoor plants increase productivity by 47%. That much productivity allows for a bunch of creativity and students that are actually focusing.

All of this is beneficial to a kinder school environment for the reason that the less stress or pressure a student may have, allows them to not always be moody. In other words, they might have a much more positive attitude. A positive attitude towards school creates a kind environment in which students more than likely need. A bonus to this, growing a garden is also beneficial to the actual environment, that could possibly be a reason to grow a garden. Not to mention the fact that growing plants means taking care of them as if you would a person. This might make students be more gentle with other students.

So in conclusion, a garden, or indoor houseplants, may be beneficial to a school environment for the reason that the less stress they have, the kinder they may be. That's not all, students even focus more with these plants! Not only may plants increase positivity, they increase concentration, which is very beneficial to the teachers.

## Kenji Jaimes-Tsurutaka

We can foster kindness in our school environment by starting a staff assistance program or club, in which students will be able to help/assist staff members with menial tasks such as picking up trash in the classroom or cafeteria. For example, in the morning, a student will be assigned a teacher to help in a simple way to provide support and appreciation to our staff members and to foster a kinder environment. Students can not only be able to foster kindness, they can also get rewarded with community service hours that can help students be able to do the required amount of service hours for their graduation.

### Helping Other Students.

We can foster kindness by allowing students to have an opinion about their school and to explain their opinion via a school “wellness” survey. Which will help the school improve upon student opinion. The school can offer questions about how the student feels about going to school and how the school can help and support the students that don’t specifically like or appreciate the school.

### SEL Programs

We can foster kindness in our school environment by implementing a SEL program or Social-Emotional Learning. Which teaches students about self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, skillful relationships, and responsible decision-making. Say, you're in a SEL program, you are able to empathize easily with others and help support them in times of need. The SEL curriculum houses a variety of opportunities of learning. Social-Emotional Learning has also included adult learning programs for teachers to help them develop better learning relations towards students, while also improving student and teacher well-being.

### CONCLUSION

By establishing staff support clubs, allowing students to be heard, and implementing SEL programs and curriculum, our school environment can improve on fostering kindness among peers and staff.

### Works Cited

Our programs | Second step. (n.d.). Second Step. <https://www.secondstep.org/our-programs>