random acts of kindness

difficulty: moderate | frequency: 1x/day | duration: 10 mins

why you should try it

we all perform acts of kindness at one time or another. these acts may be large or small, and their beneficiaries may not even be aware of them. yet their effects can be profound—not only on the recipient but on the giver, as well. this exercise asks you to perform five acts of kindness in one day as a way of cultivating feelings of kindness and happiness in yourself, so that you can extend kindness to your local community and the world.

why it works

researchers believe this practice makes you feel happier because it makes you think more highly of yourself and become more aware of positive social interactions. it may also increase your kind, helpful attitudes and tendencies toward others in your family or your community. evidence suggests that variety is key: there's a risk that kindness can start to feel routine, so it helps to approach it with a spirit of curiosity, always looking for new ways to express your care and kindness and looking for new people to help.

sources


study participants who performed five acts of kindness every week for six weeks saw a significant boost in happiness, but only if they performed their five acts in a single day rather than spread out over each week. this may be because many acts of kindness are small, so spreading them out might make them harder to remember and savor.

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This practice is part of Greater Good in Action, a clearinghouse of the best research-tested methods for increasing happiness, resilience, kindness, and connection, created by the Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley and HopeLab.