

RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS

Difficulty: **MODERATE** | Frequency: **1X/DAY** | Duration: **VARIABLE**



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 both promoting kindness in the world and cultivating happiness in yourself and others.

TIME REQUIRED

Varies depending on your acts of kindness. Could be anywhere from several minutes to several hours.

HOW TO DO IT

One day this week, perform five acts of kindness—all five in one day. It doesn't matter if the acts are big or small, but it is more effective if you perform a variety of acts.

The acts do not need to be for the same person—the person doesn't even have to be aware of them. Examples include feeding a stranger's parking meter, donating blood, helping a friend with a chore, or providing a meal to a person in need.

After each act, write down what you did in at least one or two sentences; for more of a happiness boost, also write down how it made you feel.

EVIDENCE IT THAT WORKS

Lyubomirsky, S., Sheldon, K., & Schkade, D. (2005). [Pursuing happiness: The architecture of sustainable change](#). *Review of General Psychology*, 9(2), 111-131.

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.

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—or “prosocial”—attitudes and tendencies toward others. Evidence suggests that variety is key: People who perform the same acts over and over show a downward trajectory in happiness, perhaps because any act starts to feel less special the more it becomes routine.

SOURCES

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](#).

