

## ***Random Acts of Kindness – The New Health Food!***

We all know that getting our daily-required allowance of fruits and vegetable, grains, proteins and dairy products can give us the nutrients needed for a healthy diet and life. But did you know that random acts of kindness could also be good for your health? It's true!

People who have been surveyed regarding random acts of kindness agree that doing a kind deed for someone make them "feel good." But the Random Acts of Kindness Foundation reports that there are a number of scientific studies that show that acts of kindness result in significant health benefits, both physically and mentally for those who perform them.

Allan Luks, whose book *The Healing Power of Doing Good: The Health and Spiritual Benefits of Helping Others*, indicates that, "helping contributes to the maintenance of good health, and it can diminish the effect of diseases and disorders both serious and minor, psychological and physical."

The participants in his study testified to feeling a rush of euphoria, followed by a longer period of calm, after performing a kind act. Luks states that this feeling involves, "physical sensations that strongly indicate a sharp reduction in stress and the release of the body's natural painkillers, the endorphins. The initial rush is followed by a longer-lasting period of improved emotional wellbeing."

Dr. Paul K. Pearsall, in his book *The Pleasure Prescription*, discusses the relatively new field of psychoneuroimmunology (PNI), which studies the relationship between human behavior, psychosocial factors, the brain, the body and resistance to or immunity against disease, viruses and infections.

More evidence comes out of a ten-year study of the physical, health and social activities of 2700 men in Tecumseh, Michigan. This study found that those who did regular volunteer work had death rates two and one-half times lower than those who didn't volunteer.

The Random Acts of Kindness Foundation has determined the following key points as they relate to the benefit of performing kind acts:

- Helping contributes to the maintenance of good health, diminishes the effect of disease and disorders, both psychologically and physically
- Stress-related health problems improve after performing acts of kindness'
- Helping can enhance feelings of joyfulness, emotional resilience and vigor
- Helping can reduce a sense of isolation

- A decrease in both the intensity and awareness of physical pain can occur after performing an act of kindness
- Helping can cause a reduction in the attitude such as chronic hostility and negativity, which can be damaging to a person's health
- An increased sense of self-worth, greater happiness and optimism are also benefits of helping others

I know for myself that I have had people over the years come to my rescue with acts of kindness, whether it was when I had a flat tire or simply needed a cheerful call from a friend. It always came when I needed it most.

A woman was taking a class at a local technical school. Most of the class was made up of younger people and it was difficult for her to keep up at times in the class, as well as with homework. She made friends in the class and was able to look around and see that everyone had struggles in one way or another. Whether it was the person who worked two jobs and was running low on energy when it came to class time, or perhaps the young mother who was a single parent striving to make a better life for her sons and herself, they all had challenges.

One day she approached the young mother and handed her an envelope. Then, with no explanation, she turned and walked into the classroom. The young mother, in a hurry to get to class, placed the envelope in her purse.

It wasn't until much later that evening that she remembered and opened the envelope. Inside was a note that read, "I think you are doing a great job as a mom and I would like to treat you, your two small boys, and a guest to a day at the circus." Enclosed were four tickets and a \$100 bill.

This story is special to me because that young mother was my daughter and those small boys are my grandsons. The giving woman in her wisdom knew that my daughter was working very hard to make a good life for her family and was saving every penny she had for all the necessities they needed, which did not include tickets to the circus.

My daughter invited me to attend with them and we all had a very memorable time. I will never forget that woman who put smiles on the faces of the two little boys, and brought tears to the eyes of a mom and a grandma that day through her act of kindness.

I sent her a note and told her how much I appreciated her kindness toward my daughter and that it would never be forgotten. I have also tried to follow her example by performing random acts of kindness whenever possible.

You can do the same. Do you know someone who is in need of a little care? Is there a neighbor who could use your help? Perhaps you would be able to help out with one of your local organizations for one day a week.

But maybe it is as simple as holding the door for someone else or telling someone thanks for a job well done. It doesn't take a lot to qualify as a random act of kindness. Could you imagine a world in which people did nice things for one another without any regard to what their benefit would be, other than to feel good? It can happen. If each one of us did one random act of kindness each day we could make our world a better place. Not only would our world be a nicer place in which to live, but we would also be much healthier for having performed acts of kindness.

Albert Schweitzer once said, "Constant kindness can accomplish much. As the sun makes ice melt, kindness causes misunderstandings, mistrust and hostility to evaporate."

Knowing that our world is full of hostility, distrust and other issues, it would seem that a bit of melting by kindness could be in order. Think of it this way – it could be a positive form of "global warming," warming the hearts of others.

Shall we start today and look for that opportunity to do something nice for someone we meet on our paths today? Just try it. What have you got to lose? You certainly have a lot to gain in the health benefits mentioned above. And think about all the pain and stress-related disease we could reduce just by being nice to one another.

All of us at The Caring Presence really do care, and we put into practice our motto, "Beyond Expectations" when caring for our clients and our community. We practice random acts of kindness whenever possible. So give it a try today!

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