

## Happiness is being kind.

Did you know that kindness is a natural antidepressant? It's true. Being kind is a scientifically proven way to improve your spirits. So if you would like to instantly feel better about yourself and change any negative feelings to positive ones all you need to do is be kind to another human being.

In his bestselling book, *The Power of Intention*, Dr. Wayne Dyer sites research that an act of kindness increases the serotonin levels in your brain. Serotonin is a natural chemical in your body that is responsible for improving mood. Many of the antidepressant medications on the market today work by enhancing the body's utilization of serotonin. According to Dr. Dyer, however, science has discovered that an act of kindness will increase the release of serotonin in your brain without the need for medication.

The interesting conclusions found are that serotonin levels are increased in both the giver and receiver of an act of kindness. In addition, anyone who witnesses an act of kindness also has an increase in serotonin levels. Wow. Kindness is a natural antidepressant for the giver, receiver, and witness of human compassion.

A recent example in my own life illustrates the truth of the above findings. Days before this last Christmas, my bookkeeper came to my office to help with year end accounting. Normally she works in a focused manner, but on this particular day she was preoccupied. She told me of a young boy who wrote to Santa Claus asking only for a new bed. His bed was worn with holes in it and all he wanted for Christmas was a new bed. No toys, just a bed. Too distracted to work on my accounting my bookkeeper picked up the phone and began calling furniture shops with the intention one would be willing to gift a bed for this child. Kindly, one furniture store in Ukiah did. Just to be a witness to this episode brought tears to my eyes, enormous respect for my bookkeeper and gratitude that Santa would bring a bed to this boy.

Here are some ways you can practice kindness in your life.

Volunteer. When you volunteer, you focus outside of yourself. According to Dr. Christopher Peterson of the University of Michigan, a researcher on the psychology of happiness, "Giving makes you feel good about yourself and gives meaning to your life." My own activities as a soccer coach and teacher for Sutter Lakeside Wellness Center have emotionally enriched my life. When you get the focus off of yourself you will be surprised how much better you will feel.

Help someone elderly. You can carry a grocery bag, open a door with a smile, or bring a neighbor Sunday night dinner. There are an unlimited number of ways you can help someone who may be lonely or in need.

Tithe to a charity. If you have the resources, giving to charity is very uplifting. Tithing need not always be in the form of money. You can tithe canned food, clothes, or things you have no use for that are in storage.

Kindness will bring to you a cascade of positive effects. Kindness elevates feelings of generosity, capability, contribution, compassion, and connection. Kindness is contagious in that it will win you smiles. There is reciprocity in kindness and as they say, "Like attracts like." Be kind and watch kindness come back to you.

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