

# The Benefits of Kindness in the Workplace

How being kinder and expressing more gratitude can make you happier and more positive!

Be careful they are contagious and could infect your whole workplace!!

---

## The Five Side-effects of Kindness

The concept of kindness has been extensively researched and a wonderful book that I'm currently reading *The Five Side-effects of Kindness* by David R Hamilton brings a lot of this research together. The side effects of kindness are –

1. **Kindness makes us happier** – acts of kindness cause serotonin to be released in the brains of the giver, the recipient, and observers. Serotonin improves mood and reduces depression.
2. **Kindness is good for the heart** – kindness uplifts us by releasing oxytocin into the body that triggers a chemical chain reaction that results in the dilation of arteries and a reduction in blood pressure. It also assists to reduce the likelihood of heart attack or stroke.
3. **Kindness slows ageing** – the chemicals produced in our bodies when we are surrounded by kindness, compassion and emotional support contribute in different ways to slowing down aging in the following areas – increases muscle regeneration, reduces inflammation, reduces oxidative stress, increases levels of nitric oxide, slows down the loss of telomere length and slows the reduction in our immune systems that occur with age.
4. **Kindness improves relationships** – it is what makes friendships and relationships successful. Social connectedness has positive impacts of wellbeing and longevity.
5. **Kindness is contagious** – people who witness acts of kindness are more likely to be kind to others and this creates a ripple effect that propagates and significantly magnifies the positive impact of any act of kindness well above the initial action.

This book also brings together many of the most significant and inspiring research studies in the areas of kindness and positive emotions.

## Helping, Volunteering and Giving

Much of the research on kindness focus on the concepts of volunteering and giving in the charitable sense. Various studies in this area have found that people who have volunteered throughout their lifetime generally live longer and have better psychological wellbeing. This is due to both the sense of purpose that is obtained, and the neurochemical side effects related to kindness above. The feelings associated with volunteering are sometimes described as 'the helpers high'. In this way, volunteering can help to counteract the effects of stress, anger and anxiety, whilst also providing meaningful social connections.

Helping others takes countless forms, from giving money to charity to helping a stranger jump start their car or buying someone a coffee. The desire to help others springs from many different motivations – anything from profound empathy to a more calculated desire for significance and public recognition.

From my observation, the positive impacts are magnified when the original motivation is unselfish in nature.

## Kindness, Compassion and Gratitude

**Kindness** - the quality of being friendly, generous, and considerate.

synonyms:

goodwill · affection · warmth · gentleness · tenderness · concern · care · consideration · helpfulness · thoughtfulness · altruism · compassion · sympathy · understanding · benevolence · friendliness · hospitality · amiability · generosity · indulgence · patience · tolerance · charitableness · graciousness · mercifulness

**Compassion** - sympathetic pity and concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others.

synonyms:

pity · sympathy · feeling · fellow feeling · empathy · understanding · care · concern · solicitude · solicitousness · sensitivity · warmth · love · tenderness · gentleness · mercy · leniency · tolerance · consideration · kindness · charity · benevolence

**Gratitude** - the quality of being thankful; readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness.

synonyms:

gratefulness · thankfulness · thanks · appreciation · recognition · acknowledgement · credit · regard · respect · sense of obligation · indebtedness

*Just reading these three words – Kindness, Compassion and Gratitude - and looking at all the positive synonyms, makes me feel happier and it's having the same effect on you too.*

Dr. Andrew Newberg, a neuroscientist at Thomas Jefferson University, and Mark Robert Waldman, a communications expert, have written the book *Words Can Change Your Brain*, Penguin Group, 2012. In the book, they write, “a single word has the power to influence the expression of genes that regulate physical and emotional stress.” When we use positive words like “love”, “peace” and “loving-kindness”, we increase our cognitive reasoning abilities and strengthening areas in our frontal lobes. Using positive words more often than negative words can also activate the motivational centres of the brain, propelling us to take action.

## The Kindness Multiplier Effect

The positive benefits of kindness and gratitude are magnified by the contagion effect observed in many research studies, including those referenced above.

There is no doubt that being kinder to your family and close connections, and expressing your gratitude more regularly, will improve these relationships. Life's stresses and frustrations can make it feel like there is less kindness and gratitude available to share and express. And yet, it is when we are experiencing challenging times that we will benefit the most from positive close relationships.

Just like LOVE, there is no limit to the amount of kindness a person can exhibit and no limit to the amount of gratitude you can express. The more kindness and gratitude you create, the more there will be!

## The Importance of Gratitude

For me, kindness and gratitude go hand in hand. Both are contagious. When used regularly and together they also create a multiplier effect.

Two psychologists, Dr. Robert A. Emmons and Dr. Michael E. McCullough have done much of the research on gratitude. In one study, they asked all participants to write a few sentences each week, focusing on particular topics.

One group wrote about things they were grateful for that had occurred during the week. A second group wrote about daily irritations or things that had displeased them, and the third wrote about events that had affected them (with no emphasis on them being positive or negative). After 10 weeks, those who wrote about gratitude were more optimistic and felt better about their lives. Surprisingly, they also exercised more and had fewer visits to physicians than those who focused on sources of aggravation.

Another leading researcher and the founder of the field of Positive Psychology Dr. Martin E. P. Seligman tested the impact of various positive psychology interventions on 411 people, each compared with a control group. Participants were assigned different tasks each week including writing about early memories. One week their assignment was to write and personally deliver a letter of gratitude to someone who had never been properly thanked for their kindness. After this week, participants immediately exhibited a huge increase in happiness scores. This impact was greater than that from any other intervention, with benefits lasting for a month.

Writing a letter of gratitude and personally delivering it had a huge increase in happiness scores that lasted for a month!

## Taking Gratitude and Kindness to Work

It makes sense that we can apply all these learnings to achieve improvements in workplace culture. Imagine how it would feel to turn up to work every day knowing that it is a place of positivity and kindness, where people support each other and express gratitude. Where feedback is constructive, and learning is encouraged.

So how can we take all these positive learnings and apply them in the work environment?

The concept of taking kindness to work is easy and consists of two parts –

1. Being kinder to yourself by removing the inner critic and replacing it with your inner coach, and
2. Being kinder to work mates by supporting them to perform their best every day

The concept of taking gratitude to work is just as easy and also consists of two parts –

1. Saying thank you and expressing your gratitude to work mates more regularly, and
2. Reflecting on the things you are grateful for each day

## How to be Kinder at Work

Here is a list of ways to be kinder at work –

- Smile and greet your colleagues in the morning
- Wish colleagues a nice evening or a good weekend
- Encourage team mates to take regular short breaks throughout the day
- Share knowledge and expertise in a constructive manner
- Replace negative emotional responses with more constructive responses
- Celebrate an achievement or milestone by having a team morning tea
- Bring some flowers into work for a colleague or for the team
- Pour glasses of water for everyone in a meeting
- Buy someone a coffee when you go to get yours
- Be curious – seek to understand someone else's opinion when it is different to your own
- Give your team opportunities to come up with improvements in work practices
- Being a role model of positive behaviour
- Respect differences in opinions and beliefs
- Be inclusive of everyone
- Exchange personal stories with a colleague
- Organise a team get together to understand more about each other

If you're stuck for ideas, the Random Acts of Kindness Foundation has developed a [workplace kindness calendar](#) that is free to download and can also be integrated into your Outlook, Google or iOS calendar for daily ideas and reminders about acts of kindness that you can do during the working week and on the weekends.

## Showing Gratitude at Work

Showing gratitude at work is even easier, all it takes is a simple thank you to anyone who helps you or does something kind. For some people this can feel unnatural or forced at first and you don't want to be excessive, or the positive impact can be reduced. With practice it will become an ingrained, automatic response and it will generate similar responses in others.

It doesn't always require the words 'thank you'. There are other ways to express gratitude, for example, you can complement a colleague on a job well done or acknowledge how someone has helped you to achieve work outcomes.

## Gratitude Practice

According to the [Resilience Project](#) it is possible to use a gratitude practice to rewire your brain to scan the world for positivity and it only takes 21 days. And after 42 days you –

- Are less likely to get sick
- Have higher energy
- Feel happier
- Are more enthusiastic
- Are more attentive
- Are more determined
- Are more optimistic
- Have a better quality of sleep
- Have lower levels of depression and anxiety

It is relatively easy to develop a gratitude practice and with a little discipline you can achieve the benefits above. Here are some simple ideas to get you started and all of them require a form of gratitude journal or log –

**Option 1 – grab your gratitude journal and write down 3 things that went well for you today** and do it every day, don't worry if they are often the same and it is interesting to reflect on them from time to time

**Option 2 – consider the following 3 questions at the end of every day** and write the answers in your gratitude journal –

1. What was the best thing that happened to me today?
2. Who am I most grateful to today and why?
3. What am I looking forward to most about tomorrow?

**Option 3 – text 5 things that you are grateful for to a trusted friend.** This is my personal favourite. My best friend and I do this every night before we go to sleep. He has been struggling with anger and depression over the last few months and he acknowledges that the gratitude practice is definitely working to lift his mood. Some days it is harder than others, although I absolutely believe that...

Not all days are good days, although there is some good in every day!

## About the author...



Hi, I'm Therese Linton, a global leader in legal project management legal process improvement and personal productivity. Over the last decade I've worked with thousands of lawyers to introduce innovative ways of working that delights clients, reduces stress, improves work-life balance and leads to better legal outcomes.

I've been encouraged by my best friend, business partner and many clients to expand the positive impact of these ways of working with the NEW Positive Lawyer coaching program.

I've been growing and learning throughout this journey myself. I have firsthand experience with learning new skills, along with the ups and downs that are inevitable when striving for mastery.

## Announcing an amazing new program - THE POSITIVE LAWYER®

The Positive Lawyer provides the new 'non-negotiable' approaches to legal work, and a well-researched collection of tools and techniques to support positive mindsets, improve resilience and uplift legal working environments.

It's the solution for lawyers who want to stress less and live more! Participants will be supported with a ground-breaking coaching program, tailored to address the complex challenges faced by lawyers today. Over 12 weeks you will participate in 6 face to face sessions, or workshops, and have fortnightly contact to complete guided activities to support your breakthrough and transformation.

If you're committed to releasing yourself from limiting beliefs; learning new skills that are critical to your success; developing and implementing realistic action plans; reigniting your enthusiasm for your career...then register your interest at <https://basaltgroup.clickfunnels.com/registerpl>.

You will be the first to know when the program is available, and we'll keep you motivated and updated along the way.

***My aim is to inspire you to achieve great things and I look forward to joining you on your journey! Cheers....T***