

## Kindness Practice #4

# Recalling Kindness Towards Others

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**Duration:** 15 minutes

**Frequency:** Weekly

**Level of Difficulty:** Moderate

**Overview:** Although the majority of kindness-oriented practices involve engaging in new acts of compassion towards others, some research suggests that it may be equally important for us to step back and appreciate the ways in which we already show kindness and compassion. In other words, instead of simply expanding the ways in which we practice kindness towards others, it is just as critical that we pause and acknowledge the ways in which we are already doing so.

**Instructions:** In our everyday lives, we all practice acts of compassion and kindness to those around us. At times, we do this without much conscious awareness, perhaps because it comes easily to us and we give it little thought. Recent findings in the field of happiness and well-being research suggests that it can be very helpful to step back, notice, and savor the ways in which we are already helping others in our life.

Thinking back over the past week, reflect on the ways in which you've already shown kindness towards others, or helped someone in need. These acts of kindness may be seemingly small ones, such as holding the door for someone, or offering a friendly smile to a stranger; or they may be more significant in nature, such as volunteering at a local agency, or mowing the lawn for an elderly couple that lives down the street. No matter the size of the act, reflect on the ways in which you have shown kindness and compassion toward others over the past week. Write down five such examples, and repeat on a weekly basis.

**Example:**

*Kind Act #1:* Called a friend to check in on how he was doing, because he'd been struggling recently.

*Kind Act #2:* Put money in a stranger's parking meter that had just expired.

*Kind Act #3:* Paid for a stranger's coffee who had forgotten their wallet.

*Kind Act #4:* Sent a "get well" card to someone who'd been battling a health problem.

*Kind Act #5:* Covered a hospital shift for a colleague who was feeling overwhelmed with responsibilities at work.

**Practice:**

*Kind Act #1:*

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*Kind Act #2:*

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*Kind Act #3:*

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*Kind Act #4:*

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*Kind Act #5:*

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**Key Points to Consider:**

- ✓ Feel free to experiment with frequency; some people enjoy looking back one week at a time, while others prefer to check in with themselves at the end of each day to add to their list.
- ✓ Notice the small stuff: Many seemingly smaller acts of kindness can go unnoticed, so take a moment and reflect on all the ways you've shown compassion and kindness towards others.
- ✓ Allow it to sink in: After generating your list of kind acts, take a moment to savor the positive feelings that come up for you after reflecting on them.

**How and why it works:** Practicing kindness and compassion towards others helps us in a number of ways. First, it provides us with a sense of connection to those around us, and boosts our feelings of self-worth and meaning. Furthermore, there is evidence that engaging in kindness and compassion activates the pleasure and reward circuits of our brain, and may even lead to a release of both dopamine and endorphins. Another benefit of kindness is that it helps us view our own struggles in a different light, and offers us a new perspective on our own troubles. It can be easy to overlook the ways in which we are already engaging in acts of compassion and altruism, particularly in small ways. This exercise helps you to identify the various ways that kindness and compassion are already a part of your everyday life.

**Notes/Impressions:**

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