

Kindness as a Way to Wellness



*If you want others
to be happy,
practice compassion.
If you want
to be happy,
practice compassion.*

— The Dalai Lama —

time, and giving without expecting anything in return. When we show others the kindness we would like shown to us, we often find that it comes back into our own lives.

Many people living with mood disorders know that relationships and community are a part of our recovery. On the other hand, practicing kindness can be extremely difficult, especially when living with symptoms like irritability, anger, sadness and feelings of worthlessness. But acts of kindness may not require a lot of effort. Look for small ways you can make kindness part of your life, no matter how you feel. You might start by asking yourself these questions at the end of each day:

- Was I selfish or unkind today?
- Do I owe an apology?
- Have I kept something to myself that I need to talk with someone about?
- Was I thinking of myself all day, or did I think of others?
- How can I be kinder tomorrow?

DBSA does not endorse or recommend the use of any specific treatments or medications for mood disorders. For advice about specific treatments or medications, individuals should consult their physicians and/or mental health professionals.

As people living with mood disorders, we spend a lot of time focused on our internal selves – our minds, our moods, and our emotions. We might not focus as often on our outward actions in the world. Doing small things to make the world a better place can bring us closer to wellness.

Kindness includes many habits we know as simple good manners: saying “please” and “thank you,” waiting your turn, lending a helping hand, or cheering someone up with a smile. Kindness also means being generous with your presence and your

What can I do?

- Take time to listen to someone else.
- Contact an old friend or family member you haven’t talked to in a while
- Open a door for someone
- Help a new person at your job or support group
- Volunteer
- Compliment someone

Start with this list and add your own ideas.

In *How I Stayed Alive When my Brain was Trying to Kill Me*, *One Person’s Guide to Suicide Prevention*, Susan Rose Blauner writes, “Acts of service build self-confidence, reinforce connection with living things and remind us that we have the ability to be kind, to others and to ourselves... For suicidal thinkers, there’s an added bonus: while you’re busy doing a good deed, your brain is temporarily diverted and suicidal thoughts are put on hold.”

In *The Healing Power of Doing Good: The Health and Spiritual Benefits of Helping Others*, Allan Luks writes “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.”



*Forget injuries,
never forget
kindnesses.*

— Confucius —

The best known of the kindness groups in America is The Random Acts of Kindness Foundation, who believe that “as people tap into their own generous human spirit and share kindness with one another, they discover for themselves the power of kindness to effect positive change.”

Adding kindness into our lives is a valuable part of wellness. Small acts of thoughtfulness can help us connect with the world, grow emotionally and improve others’ lives as well as our own.

For more information:

www.ActsOfKindness.org
www.HowIStayedAlive.com