

Let's bring back true kindness

Being kind and being cordial are two different things

By Deborah Camacho, M.S., SIA Prevention Services

Today there seems to be a disconnect between being cordial and being truly kind. Follow along and let's make the case for spreading true kindness and compassion wherever you go.

First, being kind is not the same as being nice. Most people believe they're kind, but studies show that what they actually mean is they're nice, according to Houston Kraft's book "Deep Kindness." Kindness, particularly "deep kindness," a term he coined, is very different from simply being nice.

"Niceness has to do with your reputation and how people see you, and that can be adaptable for different circumstances," explains Randy Taran, founder of Project Happiness, a nonprofit organization dedicated to spreading happiness to individuals and communities. "The nice person is about being pleasant and not rocking the boat."

Kindness, on the other hand, sometimes requires a bit of boat-rocking. For example, if your friend comes to you for advice about a troubled relationship, you may be tempted to keep the conversation light and avoid sharing any painful truths. But the kind thing to do would be to have a real discussion with your friend, share your perspectives and address the friend's needs. Kindness demands that level of honesty, risk-taking and more. The uncomfortable moments are worth it because the emotional and physical benefits of deep

kindness ripple outward into families, communities and beyond.

Here are some strategies to get you started on your own journey toward deep kindness:

Build Empathy and Compassion

- Empathy and compassion are the building blocks of kindness.
 - o Interact with others as often as possible.



- o Choose activities that force you to gather in groups, such as bowling, game nights, etc.
- o Model caring, compassion and kind behavior.
- o Start a community garden or block party to get to know your neighbors.
- o Check in on elderly folks who live alone.

Take Risks

Many representations we see of kindness in the media involve "shareable moments of high-flying goodness," such as pay-it-forward coffee lines. These are known as "confetti kindness," things you do because others are doing them or because they're easy. But also think about changing not just moments, but also days, weeks, years or even lives. For example, you can compliment

someone's outfit, which may make that person's day, but if you want to make lasting change, send someone a note detailing the wonderful influence that that person's been in your life. While the surface kindness is nice, push yourself out of your comfort zone to see how you can have a more lasting impact on your friends, colleagues and community.

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- The impact of kindness
- Avoid backpack backaches

Kind vs. cordial

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Taking risks involves time and effort and it may be uncomfortable. Telling someone how much they've meant to you can make you vulnerable, but that openness is what builds deep connections between people and within communities.

Allowing someone to make missteps is another kindness that can feel risky or uncomfortable. "You could say kindness is a verb," Taran says, "and sometimes it can be expressed in action when you go out of your way to help a person who has tripped on the street. Other times, kindness is simply allowing someone to learn by making mistakes."

Learn the Art of No

If you find yourself saying yes to obligations or invitations that you'd really prefer not to accept, you might be overlooking your own needs in favor of people-pleasing, which can lead to frustration, burnout and depression.

The nice person avoids confrontation for fear of disappointing someone, often tolerating unacceptable behavior for the same reason. Such a person tends to overdo it and often becomes exhausted, even resentful, because of doing so much and tolerating too much.

When you feel overwhelmed or overburdened, your body can go into fight-or-flight mode, which can make you more prone to anger. When this happens repeatedly, your nervous system becomes trained to react in bigger ways to smaller stimuli. In this respect, declining unwanted invitations or obligations is an act of kindness toward yourself. You're also showing the other person that you respect his or her ability to handle a negative response. And because you'll have more energy for the things you want to do, that benevolent action could have a ripple effect: You'll be kinder to yourself, your family and your community.

Here are a few strategies for setting boundaries:

- **Rehearse kindness.**
 - o Be firm and practice ways to say no before you're faced with that situation.
- **Be vague if necessary but always honest.**
 - o For example, rather than concocting an elaborate lie about why you can't attend your friend's son's piano recital, you could say, "Thank you for asking, but I can't make it that evening." Then stand by your words.

Examine Your Intention

Let's be very clear: There's nothing wrong with being cordial. For some, being cordial is very uncomfortable and yet can be the first step toward true kindness. The most important thing of all is one's intention. The "why" they are doing something is more important than the "what" when it comes to kindness. If your intentions are truly centered on making someone's world better, then you know you've accomplished true kindness. Our actions must come from the heart, and when they do, they move others toward kindness, compassion and empathy. Let's begin to put others' needs before our own, if only for a moment, a day or a lifetime, then sit back and just watch how your true kindness will replicate in your life.

Remember, nice people don't change the world, kind people do.

Pack it light, wear it right Backpack safety begins with injury and posture awareness

National Backpack Awareness Day is September 21

By Lyn Poll, M.S., SIA Prevention Services

Did you know that the Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that each year approximately 8,000 children go to emergency rooms because of injuries related to heavy, improperly worn backpacks? Wearing and packing a backpack may seem simple enough, but when worn incorrectly it can lead to back, shoulder and neck problems. A properly fitted and supportive backpack, on the other hand, can help children (and adults) avoid future injuries and postural problems.



Half of all students between the ages of 13 and 16 suffer from back pain due to improperly fitted and loaded backpacks, according to The American Pediatric Association. Yet when packed and worn correctly, backpacks can evenly distribute weight between the back and stomach muscles. Weight that is unbalanced or too heavy can compress the spine, strain or injure the neck and shoulders, and affect posture. So here are some guidelines to help your child prevent injury:

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Reversing negativity •
starts with practicing positivity

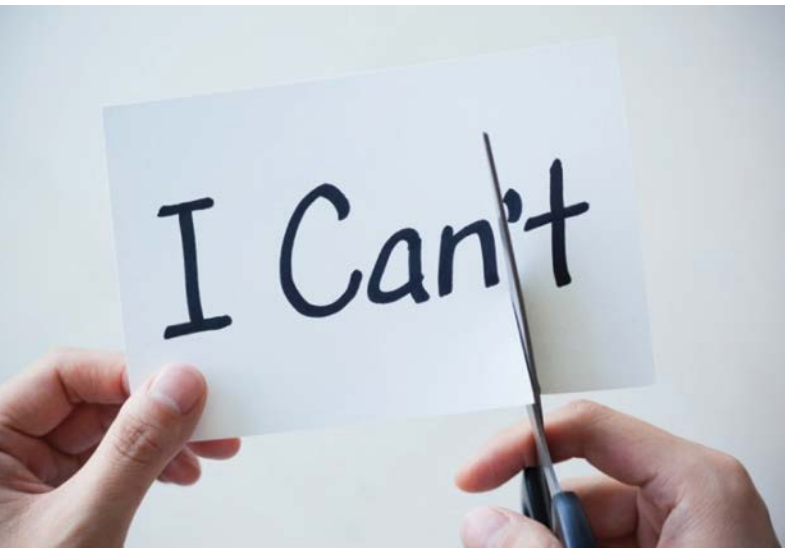


There are 5 ways to break the negativity habit

By Bill King

Have you ever caught yourself thinking negative thoughts? Of course you have. Everybody has. On any given day the average person has between 30,000 and 50,000 thoughts. How many of yours do you think are positive and how many do you think are negative? The real question is how many of them are you even *aware of*?

Most of us have no idea what we think most of the time. If we did, we might really scare ourselves. Unfortunately, most people think negative thoughts a good part of the time and it's no wonder because we're bombarded with negativity daily. All you have to do is turn on the TV and you'll see all kinds of negative stuff. Throw in social media, along with the stress about the economy, inflation and keeping our kids safe in school, and you can really rack up the negative thoughts. You might think you can't help it, that thoughts are thoughts and there's nothing you can do about them, but the truth is you can. You can break the negativity habit.



Science tells us that what we focus on expands. This is due to the Reticular Activating System¹ (RAS), which ultimately teaches our brain what to notice and pay attention to. This means that the more time you spend thinking negative thoughts, the more negative experiences you'll have. The beauty is that the opposite is also true. The more time you spend in peace – having loving, grateful and positive thoughts – the more relaxed and happy you'll be. Now how sweet is that.

Did you know that positive thinking often creates positive results? If you think you can accomplish something, the more likely you are to do it. If you exude a happy demeanor, more people will want to be around you. You begin to experience how thinking and acting can take you in a positive direction.

There are untold benefits to getting in the positivity habit, but most people aren't taught how to deal with negative thinking; there isn't a course called "Negative Thinking 101", right? So how is it done? Here are five steps that can help flip the switch and break the negativity habit:

Step 1: Become aware of your "stinkin' thinkin'."

You can't do anything about negative thinking if you don't know you have it. So, here is an exercise to help you become aware of your negative thoughts:

1. Get an index card and pen and carry them with you all day.
2. Each time you notice you have a negative thought, put one mark on it and say, "Thank you for sharing. I'm becoming aware of my "stinkin' thinkin'". Thank you."
3. At night, count how many marks you made that day.
4. Repeat daily for three days.
5. If you have more marks on day one versus day three, you're aware of and reducing your "stinkin' thinkin'". If not, repeat the activity for several more days and see what happens.

Step 2: Change your "stinkin' thinkin'" vocabulary.

First you think it, and then you say it! Another way to become aware of negative thoughts is to pay attention to your words. A simple way to stop saying negative things is to take a few days to listen for negative words others are using. Again make marks on an index card each time you notice them. After a few days, start making marks for the negative words you use. If you say something negative, put a mark on one side. But if you say something positive, put a mark on the other side. Your goal is to have more positive marks than negative ones each day.

Step 3: Become aware of what you see.

Most people go around noticing what's wrong with the world. If you look for what's right with the world, you'll experience more happiness. Start off by purposefully paying attention to what you don't like. For ten minutes write down everything you don't like. Then spend ten minutes listing the things you like instead. Your goal is to notice more things you like than things you don't. Practice daily. Then start focusing on the good things!

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- Kindness helps break the negativity habit

Breaking the negativity habit

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Step 4: Do something kind.

It's pretty much impossible to have negative thoughts when you're doing something nice. That's why your next step is to think of five kind deeds you can do over the next five days. Write them down. Next, think of two things you can do to be kind to yourself. It could be eating something healthy, exercising or paying yourself a sincere compliment. When you make kindness a habit, "stinkin' thinkin'" just about disappears.

Step 5: Track positive thinking.

Now that you're aware of negative thinking, negative words, how you see things and doing kind deeds, it's time to start tracking the sweet smell of success. Use this exercise to track your positive thinking:

1. Make an outline of a big heart on a piece of paper.
2. Carry your paper and pen with you all day and write down any positive thought, idea and emotion you have.
3. Write down anything positive you experienced that day.
4. At night, fill in the heart with the positive things you noticed.



Become aware of your negative thoughts. Change what you say and notice more of what's really cool about life. Be kind to yourself and others and focus on your positive thoughts. The big payoff is a radically fun, amazingly wicked, insanely sweet life filled with happiness and joy.

Guest contributor Bill King is a writer, speaker, certified trainer and executive. A master of designing and implementing processes to simplify complex issues with amazing results, he used this gift to design fun, exciting and educational ideas to help kids deal with negativity, low self-esteem, bullying and anger. He teaches kids positive thinking, kindness, forgiveness and awareness in a way they can relate to. To contact Bill for more information on his programs, email 3kings3@gmail.com.

¹Your Brain at Work: [*The Reticular Activating System \(RAS\) and Your Goals and Behavior*](#)

Backpack safety

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When properly loaded, a backpack:

- Weighs less than 10 percent of the carriers body weight. For someone who weighs 80 pounds, for example, the pack should weigh no more than 8 pounds.
- Makes use of all the pack's compartments to help distribute the load, with the heavier items closest to the back.
- Contains only the items necessary for the day's activities and eliminates anything that adds extra pounds.

When properly fitted, a backpack:

- Rests no more than four inches below the waistline at the bottom and optimally rests in the curve of the lower back.
- Falls two inches below the base of the neck at the top.
- Fits snugly to the back. (Use both shoulder straps, which may need to be readjusted each time the backpack is repacked, as well as the waist belt if there is one.)

Backpacks are a part of school life, but when used improperly they can cause physical problems and potentially a lifetime of discomfort. Whether you're a parent, a teacher, a coach or a doctor, become a backpack advocate by joining The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) and observe National Backpack Awareness Day on September 21. Let's help children develop healthy habits that will be "carried" out through high school, college and life.

Fun Fact: In 1968 JanSport went into business making lightweight nylon backpacks that became popular with students around the country. Today JanSport is the largest backpack maker in the world.

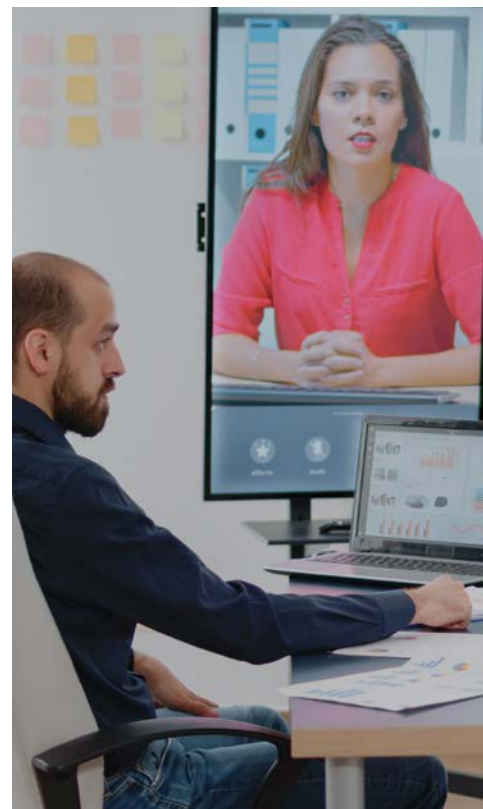
Free virtual trainings •
begin September 6



Upcoming free virtual trainings

SIA provides the staff of our member districts with virtual trainings on a variety of topics that apply to both personal and professional life. To learn more about any of the training courses listed below, contact tfranco@sia-jpa.org. You can also join our [email list](#) to learn of future events.

9/6	Effective Interview Strategies	5:30–7:30 p.m.
9/8	Alleviating Job Burnout	Noon–1 p.m.
9/15	Coping with the Stress of Economic Uncertainty	5:30–7:30 p.m.
9/20	Alleviating Job Burnout	5:30–7:30 p.m.
9/22	Healthy Boundaries at Work	Noon–1 p.m.
9/27	Bystander Intervention: Reducing Uncivil and Harassing Behavior in the Workplace	5:30–7:30 p.m.
9/29	Healthy Boundaries at Work	5:30–6:30 p.m.
10/3	Understanding Critical Incidents in the Workplace	5:30–6:30 p.m.
10/5	Maintaining Personal Safety	5:30–6:30 p.m.
10/10	Moving Towards an Intentionally Inclusive Workplace – Employee Version	Noon–1 p.m.
10/12	Working at Home While Schooling Your Children	5:30–6:30 p.m.
10/17	Parenting Through Trying Times of COVID-19	5:30–6:30 p.m.
10/19	Effective Workplace Communication	5:30–7:30 p.m.
10/24	Parenting Through Trying Times of COVID-19	Noon–1 p.m.
10/26	Moving Towards an Intentionally Inclusive Workplace – Employee version	5:30–6:30 p.m.



QUOTE TO NOTE

*"Autumn shows us
how beautiful it is to
let things go."
– Unknown*

Women's Health Virtual Webinar

Join SIA for 3 free webinars addressing women's health. Each session will be held noon to 1 p.m. with a bonus 15 minutes for Q & A. Topics presented:

[Creating Healthy Hormones](#) – Tuesday, October 11

[Menopause Essentials](#) – Tuesday, October 18

[Midlife Health and Wellbeing](#) – Tuesday, October 25

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