

# The Science of Happiness: Theory and Practice

## Acts of Kindness



# The Power of Kindness



“Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.”

~ Leo Buscaglia ~

# Kinds of Kindness



Planned / formal  
(volunteering)



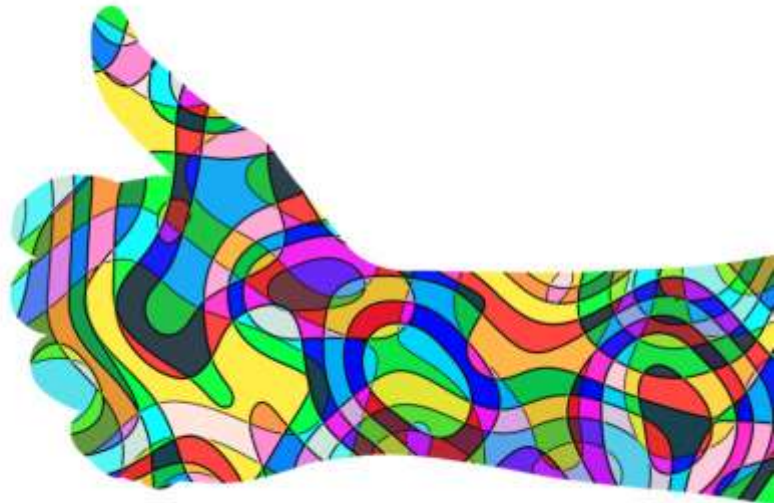
Unplanned / informal  
(random acts of kindness)

# Volunteering



- People who volunteer or care for others on a consistent basis seem to be happier and less depressed.
- Participation by recipients reinforces their self-esteem
- Motivation seems to impact volunteer wellbeing.
  - Extrinsic: Little impact
  - Intrinsic: Significant impact

## Extrinsic vs. Intrinsic Motivation



### Intrinsically motivated acts

- Arise from within
- Are performed to experience joy, sense of fulfillment, or achieve a meaningful result
- Performed “for their own sake”

### Extrinsically motivated acts

- Arise due to external conditions, such as:
  - Social pressure
  - Sense of obligation

# Random Acts of Kindness

The expression "practice random kindness and senseless acts of beauty" was coined by the author Anne Herbert. It was based on the phrase "random acts of violence and senseless acts of cruelty."



- What is a RAK?
  - Kindness on the spur of the moment
  - Kindness for its own sake
- Frequency more significant than scale
- Are you a RAKtivist?

# Why do Acts of Kindness Improve Wellbeing?



### Five reasons

- Increase self-evaluation / self-esteem
- Distract "raktivists" from preoccupation with their own troubles
- Elevate the meaning and value of life
- Increase positive moods
- Facilitate social integration

~ Elizabeth Midlarsky ~

# Kindness: Key Points



- Confucius: kindness is about walking in someone else's shoes
- Planned acts of kindness
  - Successive waves of volunteering are most effective
  - Intrinsic motivation correlated with greater happiness: If you don't want to do it, it won't make you happier
  - Participation of recipients impacts their happiness
- Unplanned acts of kindness
  - RAKtivism
  - Frequency is key, not scale



# Key Scientific Studies on Kindness

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- <https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/releases/bul-bul0000298.pdf>