



## Do Acts of Kindness

Contributed by: Anne Brafford, JD, MAPP, PhD in Progress  
 abrafford@aspire.legal | www.aspire.legal

Scientific studies have shown that doing acts of kindness for others is not just helpful to them, it's also good for your own well-being (Lyubomirsky, et al., 2005). There are a number of ways to maximize your happiness from acts of kindness:

### BURSTS OF KINDNESS

People typically get a bigger boost to their happiness when they do a bunch of smaller acts of kindness or one big act of kindness all on one day rather than spread out over a week (Lyubomirsky, et al., 2005). So consider adopting “Friendly Fridays” (or whatever day of the week you like) to shower those around you with kindness.

### YOU CHOOSE

Your acts of kindness should be things you choose and not too disruptive to your life (Della Porta, 2012).

### AIM FOR VARIETY & NOVELTY

Variety is important. Shake it up so that you don't get bored. You're more likely to sustain the benefits of doing acts of kindness when you vary your activities (Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013). Also, your acts of kindness should be new and outside of your routine activities.

### KEEP A KINDNESS JOURNAL

Record your planned acts of kindnesses and reflect on the experience. There's evidence that counting your own acts of kindness contributes to increases in happiness (Otake et al., 2006).



### BE MINDFUL

Do your kindness activities mindfully. Put yourself in the other persons' shoes and consider the impact of your actions on their lives (Lyubomirsky, 2007).

### DO SECRET ACTS

Remember that acts of kindness are not all about receiving approval and admiration. Consider doing at least one act of kindness per week anonymously. Giving for kindness' sake can reap tremendous rewards.

### BE AUTHENTIC

Acts of kindnesses can be big or small. What is important is that they be a part of your kindness intention. You'll want to design

activities that feel authentic for you.

### 44 ACTS OF KINDNESS TO DO FOR YOUR BOSSES, COLLEAGUES, STAFF, & CLIENTS

*“No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.” —Aesop*

1. Offer to help them with a difficult project or meet a tight deadline.
2. Tell them why you appreciate them.
3. Be a cheerleader for their ideas.
4. Share your expertise with them.
5. Do great work that's ready to go and requires little more from them.
6. Send them flowers.



7. Bring their favorite kind of coffee from their favorite coffee shop.
8. Assume their good intentions.
9. Make sure they know why their work matters and how it benefits others.
10. Admit to them when you're wrong.
11. Invite them to lunch.
12. Put your phone away when you're with them.
13. Tell them thank you.
14. Cheer them up after disappointments.
15. Write, make, or buy something to provide encouragement when they're experiencing difficulties.
16. Praise them to others.
17. Really be present and listen to them without interrupting.
18. Learn something new about them.
19. Look for opportunities to make helpful introductions.
20. Celebrate their accomplishments.
21. Help them before they ask.
22. If they're overwhelmed with personal or work challenges, ask if you can help in some way.
23. Forward articles that may interest them.
24. Allow them to help you.
25. Pass along useful information.
26. Buy them a book that you know they'll love.
27. Leave positive sticky notes on their computers.
28. Scout for reasons to compliment them. Shoot for three people a day.
29. Give them a "care package" when they're preparing for trial, participating in a deal closing, etc.
30. Send them greeting cards on holidays.
31. Notice and note their progress on something important to them.
32. Compliment a good presentation, high-quality meeting, contribution on a call.
33. When you open your inbox each day, make the first email you write a compliment, note of support or appreciation, or other positive jolt.



34. Sneak into their offices and leave them candy or other treats.
35. Get to know them as people, remember the details, and follow up on them.
36. Don't gossip or talk negatively about them.
37. Make them laugh.
38. Celebrate their birthdays by making them cards and a cake.
39. If they blog or publish online, read, comment, circulate, and encourage others to do the same.
40. Create a spreadsheet that includes their likes (e.g., simple things like favorite candy, favorite drink, favorite snack, etc.) and use it regularly.



41. Share credit with them.
42. Learn and use their names.
43. Start meetings by inviting them to share “what’s going well”?
44. Be their “wing man.” Find out their strengths and accomplishments and share them with others at conferences, meetings, networking events, retreats, etc.

## PAY SPECIAL ATTENTION TO NEWCOMERS

Getting started as a new lawyer or even starting at a new place of work is stressful, so try to pay special attention to newcomers when doling out your acts of kindness:

- Invite them to networking events and “shepherd” them through.
- Recommend professional associations for them to join.
- Drop by their offices and say hello.
- Make introductions—to peers, staff, leaders, clients, insiders, etc.
- Invite them to attend hearings, meetings, etc. with you.
- Offer to observe them in a hearing, deposition, call, etc., and provide feedback.
- Mentor them.
- Give guidance on developing their reputation.
- Help them learn the firm’s “political” ropes.
- Praise them to higher-ups and insiders.
- Leave a “welcome” greeting card signed by everyone on the team/department/office.
- Tell them all the great reasons they were hired.
- Leave a note saying, “We’re glad you’re here!”
- Take a strengths assessment together and share

ideas about using those strengths at work.

- Discuss their goals and how you can support them.

## REFERENCES

Della Porta, M. D. (2013). Enhancing the effects of happiness-boosting activities: The role of autonomy support in an experimental longitudinal intervention. *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences and Engineering*, Order No. AAI3518646, Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1426228539?accountid=14707>.

Lyubomirsky, S. & Layous, K. (2013). How do simple positive activities increase well-being? *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 22(1), 57-62.

Lyubomirsky, S., Sheldon, K. M., & Schkade, D. (2005). Pursuing happiness: The architecture of sustainable change. *Review of General Psychology*, 9, 111-131.

Lyubomirsky, S. (2007). *The how of happiness: A new approach to getting the life you want*. New York: Penguin Press.

Otake, K., Shimai, S., Tanaka-Matsumi, J., Otsui, K., Fredrickson, B. (2006). Happy people become happier through kindness: A counting kindnesses intervention. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 7, 361-375.