

WTNS Radio OSU Extension Update for February 17, 2020
Healthy People. Healthy Finances. Healthy Relationships.

On today's OSU Extension update for Healthy People, Healthy Finances, and Healthy Relationships we'll talk about random acts of kindness and some upcoming programs from OSU Extension.

Have you ever been on the receiving end of an act of kindness? When someone extends kindness to us that we don't deserve, it tends to make us want to pass it along. Today is Random Acts of Kindness Day and the remainder of this week is Random Acts of Kindness Week.

According to the Random Acts of Kindness Foundation, there is plenty of science to support showing kindness to others. There are many studies that have been conducted to explore how kindness affects all aspects of our lives including increasing our levels of energy, happiness, lifespan, pleasure, and serotonin, as well as decreasing levels of pain, stress, anxiety, blood pressure and depression.

A study from the University of Wisconsin found that kindness and compassion can be taught and learned, even by adults. Researcher Helen Weng says, "It's kind of like weight training... we found that people can actually build up their compassion 'muscle' and respond to others' suffering with care and a desire to help." You can even take trainings to increase your compassion online from the university's Center for Investigating Healthy Minds' website.

A recent Stanford study shows that the old adage "Kindness is Contagious" is true. We often think about how peer pressure can result in negative actions. But peer pressure can result in positive and caring actions as well. When people witness the kindness of others, it encourages them to do the same.

I have a colleague named Alisha Barton who is the Family and Consumer Sciences educator for Miami County Extension. Alisha experienced a few moments of fame last fall when she was featured on the Today Show for random acts of kindness. It's a pretty inspiring story.

As Alisha was preparing to celebrate her 40th birthday, she wanted to make it special. She had read the book "Kindness Boomerang" the previous year and embraced the challenge to do an act of kindness every day for an entire year. To continue with the theme, she invited friends to

celebrate for the 40 days leading up to her birthday by conducting random acts of kindness throughout Ohio, the country, and even around the world.

She and her friends did some pretty simple, but very appreciated things like:

- “Ding Dong ditch”—ringing the doorbells of their friends’ houses, then bolting after leaving a box of white fudge Ding Dongs on their doorsteps
- Rented shade umbrellas and beach chairs for a family she didn’t know
- Paid for the coffee and doughnuts of the retired veterans seated at a local restaurant counter
- Left quarters and laundry detergent at a local laundromat
- Made up freezer meals for college students

There are many other suggestions at randomactsofkindness.org. Several of theirs focus on the environment, but I think showing kindness to others would be great for all of us to focus on this week:

Send an encouraging email or a handwritten note, Praise a local business in person or online, Pay for the person behind you in the drive thru, Reminisce with an old friend, Leave a generous tip, Befriend the new kid or new neighbor, Ship a care package to a college student or someone in military service, Slow down when you see that yellow light, rather than speeding through the red light. There are plenty of creative ways to spread some kindness today!

If you are looking for ways to learn more about healthy lifestyle choices while managing diabetes, then OSU Extension has some great resources available. I am pleased that we will be partnering with the Coshocton Regional Medical Center this April to offer Dining with Diabetes. This is a cooking school and nutrition education program designed for people with diabetes and their family members or caregivers. Dining with Diabetes will be held the four Monday evenings of April from 5:30-7:30 pm at Coshocton Regional Medical Center. The cost of the program is \$20 per person and includes all four classes, educational handouts, and small sized meals that feature a variety of recipes. You can find more details and registration information at coshocton.osu.edu.

In closing, at OSU Extension, we are proud to work for Coshocton County to help improve our families, farms, and businesses. Please feel free to contact OSU Extension for more information at 740-622-2265 or visit our website at coshocton.osu.edu. Make it a healthy day!