

Random Acts of Kindness

Plan five varied acts of kindness and pull off as many as you can — all in one day.

15 min practice + 5 min journal

Standard practice

Handwritten journal, dated & timed

GGIA difficulty: Moderate



1 Why you should try it

We all perform acts of kindness at one time or another. These acts may be large or small, and their beneficiaries may not even be aware of them. Yet their effects can be profound — not only on the recipient but on the giver as well. This exercise asks you to perform five acts of kindness in one day as a way of both promoting kindness in the world and cultivating happiness in yourself and others.

2 The session — Prof. Magee's 15-minute protocol

Follow these timings, not the website's. Set a timer. One session = the 15 minutes below, then 5 minutes of journaling immediately after. At least 4 sessions in your 2-week window. Per the research, aim to do all five acts of a session within a single day rather than spreading them out. The 15-minute sprint starts the day's five; the log of all five is due in that day's journal.

3'

12'

3 Plan five, varied

MIN

Write a list of five acts of kindness you can do *today*. Big or small doesn't matter, but variety does, and the recipient doesn't have to know: feed a stranger's meter, text a specific genuine compliment, help a friend with a chore, pick up litter on your block, leave a note for a roommate, buy the next person's coffee, donate, give blood, visit someone.

12 Kindness sprint

MIN

Do as many of the five as you can in the next 12 minutes — small acts are perfect for this. Bigger acts you plan now and complete later the same day. After *each* act, write one or two sentences about what you did — and, for more of a happiness boost, how it made you feel.

3 Then journal — 5 minutes, by hand

- Top of the entry: **date and time**. Entries without both lose credit.
- Write for **5 minutes without stopping** (about 300 words). Messy is fine; stopping is not.
- Before / during / after: how did you feel at each point? Be specific — body, mood, thoughts.
- What surprised you? What felt fake, awkward, or easier than expected?
- **Prompt:** Which act felt best to do? Which felt awkward? Did the recipient's reaction (or lack of one) matter to how you felt?
- **Prompt:** The study found variety mattered — repeated acts lost their kick. Did you notice any act going stale?

4 Evidence that it works

Lyubomirsky, S., Sheldon, K. M., & Schkade, D. (2005)

Study participants who performed five acts of kindness every week for six weeks saw a significant boost in happiness, but only if they performed their five acts in a single day rather than spread out over each week. This may be because many acts of kindness are small, so spreading them out might make them harder to remember and savor.

5 Why it works

Researchers believe this practice makes you feel happier because it makes you think more highly of yourself and become more aware of positive social interactions. It may also increase your kind, helpful — or "prosocial" — attitudes and tendencies toward others. Evidence suggests that variety is key: people who perform the same acts over and over show a downward trajectory in happiness, perhaps because any act starts to feel less special the more it becomes routine.

6 Know the research — for your presentation (APA 7)

In your presentation you will explain, **from memory and without notes**, the evidence behind each practice — who studied it, when, and what they found — plus something *not* written on the GGIA site or on this handout. Read these papers (SJNY library or Google Scholar), then follow their citations forward to find **your own article** — one more peer-reviewed study on this topic that is not the source study here (due Sun Dec 6). Take photos along the way; they are your slides.

Lyubomirsky, S., Sheldon, K. M., & Schkade, D. (2005). Pursuing happiness: The architecture of sustainable change. *Review of General Psychology*, 9(2), 111–131. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.9.2.111>

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