

2020

IN CELEBRATION OF WORLD
KINDNESS DAY

**#PRACTICE
KINDNESS**

www.PracticeKindness.world



Search Inside Yourself
Leadership Institute



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Why Practice Kindness?

In today's world, kindness matters more than ever because - perhaps counterintuitively - it is the foundation for meaningful change. Kindness allows us to see clearly and take decisive, compassionate action because it is in the service of betterment for both ourselves and others.

We frequently hear from participants of the Search Inside Yourself program that the empathy and compassion practices like "Just Like Me" are moving, powerful and connecting. We also know from research that, like mindfulness or empathy, kindness and compassion are human capacities that we can grow and develop through practice.

So, we'd like to come together as a global community, create an intentional pause to connect with our common humanity and #PracticeKindness in celebration of World Kindness Day. When we take a moment to cultivate kindness, we can build connection, even bridging divides that have a long-standing history among us.

At a time of unprecedented global crises, 24/7 business demands and increasingly diverse workforces, we need to be able to cultivate connection at a deeper level while we celebrate what makes each person unique and their own personal experiences.

We know that this is not at all sufficient to solve global crises and structural challenges—we also need new policies, new ways of working, new systems—but we believe that our ability to see similarities and act with kindness is an essential ingredient for both our willingness to act and our ability to come up with the right solutions.

At SIYLI, we are inspired by a future where everyone feels connected to other beings and wants to contribute toward a more peaceful and compassionate world.

We hope this e-book and the #PracticeKindness movement are an invitation for many people around the world to come together and build these foundational tools for a better world through practice, discussion and celebration of our common humanity.

We hope you'll join us.



Rich Fernandez, CEO
Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute



BUILDING COMPASSION

[Researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison](#) suggest that as little as two weeks of compassion meditation training can alter the way people respond to the suffering of others. The compassion meditation group practiced what's commonly called a loving-kindness meditation, a simple meditation that involves directing well wishes toward other people (as well as ourselves). This powerful practice typically focuses inward with ourselves initially, then moves to loved ones and finally toward people we don't know. This kind of loving-kindness meditation is a little like exercising a muscle, gradually increasing the "weight" in terms of the relationships as our compassion expands.

Before we practice, it's important to know that sometimes it might feel a bit robotic or unnatural, or you don't feel what you might expect to feel with the words loving kindness; the good thing is it doesn't mean that nothing is happening or that it's not working. Research shows that the effect and benefits come from the intention and doing the practice (and the act of wishing well). You can also experiment with different phrases that resonate with you.



LET'S #PRACTICEKINDNESS

- Start by doing one to two minutes of breathing meditation. Let yourself settle into the present moment.
- Now, picture someone you know and care about—someone for whom it's easy to feel love and compassion.
- Focus on that feeling of love and compassion. Look at this person in your mind and tell him or her: **"I want you to be happy. May you be well. May you be safe. May you be at peace."**
- Repeat this for three to four minutes. Feel free to replace these specific well wishes with whatever works best for you. Let yourself fully embrace the experience of wishing the best for this person.
- Now switch from imagining someone else to imagining yourself. Again, focus on your sense of love and compassion. See yourself in your mind and repeat the same wishes: **"I want you to be happy. May you be well. May you be safe. May you be at peace."**
- Repeat for three to four minutes. Let yourself fully embrace the experience of wishing yourself the best.
- Finish with one minute of breathing meditation.

You can also direct this meditation to specific parts of yourself or areas that need your attention. This meditation can be a powerful tool for helping transform your inner critic into your inner champion. Starting by feeling compassion toward others is a great way to transition into feeling compassion for yourself.



TRY A LOVING-KINDNESS MEDITATION. **LISTEN TO THIS 10-MINUTE GUIDED MEDITATION, WHICH ENCOURAGES YOU TO ALLOW YOURSELF TO RECEIVE COMPASSION FOR YOURSELF AND EXTEND IT TO OTHERS.**

LINK: [BIT.DO/LOVING-KINDNESS](https://bit.do/loving-kindness)

**"LOVING-KINDNESS AND
COMPASSION ARE THE BASIS
FOR WISE, POWERFUL,
SOMETIMES GENTLE, AND
SOMETIMES FIERCE ACTIONS
THAT CAN REALLY MAKE A
DIFFERENCE—IN OUR OWN
LIVES AND THOSE OF
OTHERS"**

SHARON SALZBERG

SELF-KINDNESS

At SIYLI, we believe that developing kindness starts by focusing on our own selves first with mindfulness as a foundation.

In the Search Inside Yourself program, we talk about the importance of self-compassion and reference the work of Dr. Kristin Neff when presenting its three components:

1) Mindfulness

Being open to the reality of the present moment, with curiosity and kindness, and acknowledging that we're suffering. Taking a balanced approach to one's negative emotions so that feelings are neither suppressed nor exaggerated.

2) Self-kindness

Demonstrating that we care about ourselves just as we care about a good friend. Being warm towards oneself when encountering pain and personal shortcomings, rather than ignoring them or hurting oneself with self-criticism.

3) Common humanity

Recognizing that suffering and personal failure is part of the shared human experience.

One practice that has been used to help in the development of self-kindness and compassion is called "Metta."

Metta meditation is "kindness meditation." It's any kind of meditation that encourages and develops compassion. Most traditional types of Metta meditation focus on developing compassion towards others. However, this same meditation can actually be turned inward—and be directed at your own inner voice.



LET'S #PRACTICEKINDNESS

SELF-COMPASSION JOURNALING

Think of a current situation in your life where you're experiencing some challenge or difficulty (but not too difficult for the purpose of this exercise - maybe a 6 out of 10). Take a few moments to bring the experience to mind, and then reflect on the following questions:

What am I experiencing? What sensations, thoughts, emotions are present?

How do I remind myself I'm not alone in this, and this is part of being human?



LET'S #PRACTICEKINDNESS

SELF-COMPASSION JOURNALING

What do I need? How can I *be* with myself during this challenging moment?

A large rectangular area with horizontal dotted lines for journaling.

What can I say to myself in response to this situation, as if I were speaking to a dear friend?

A large rectangular area with horizontal dotted lines for journaling.



Kind hearts are the
gardens,

Kind thoughts are
the roots,

Kind words are the
blossoms,

Kind deeds are the
fruits.

ANONYMOUS

OUR COMMON HUMANITY

By Carolina Lasso

Did you know that all human beings are 99.9 percent identical in their genetic makeup? In a world that so often emphasizes separation and highlights what makes us different, **we want to celebrate what makes us human, what unites us, what we have in common, while not forgetting about our diversity and what makes each one of us unique.**

If we pay attention to the basics of being human, our experiences are probably very similar: We all get hungry and thirsty. We all need sleep. We get baby teeth (and then lose them) at around the same age. We all go through puberty and experience similar changes during that period of time. At some point in our lives, we grow gray hair. We all know that, without exception, we will die one day.

At an emotional level, we're also very similar: We all experience suffering, in one way or another, in our lifetime. Funny stuff makes us laugh. If something really touches our heart, we may get goosebumps or a teary eye. We tend to look down and tighten our bodies when experiencing sadness or shame. Our bodies are likely to expand when we feel joyous, free or excited. We release oxytocin when get a good hug. Our hearts race faster when we kiss our crush.



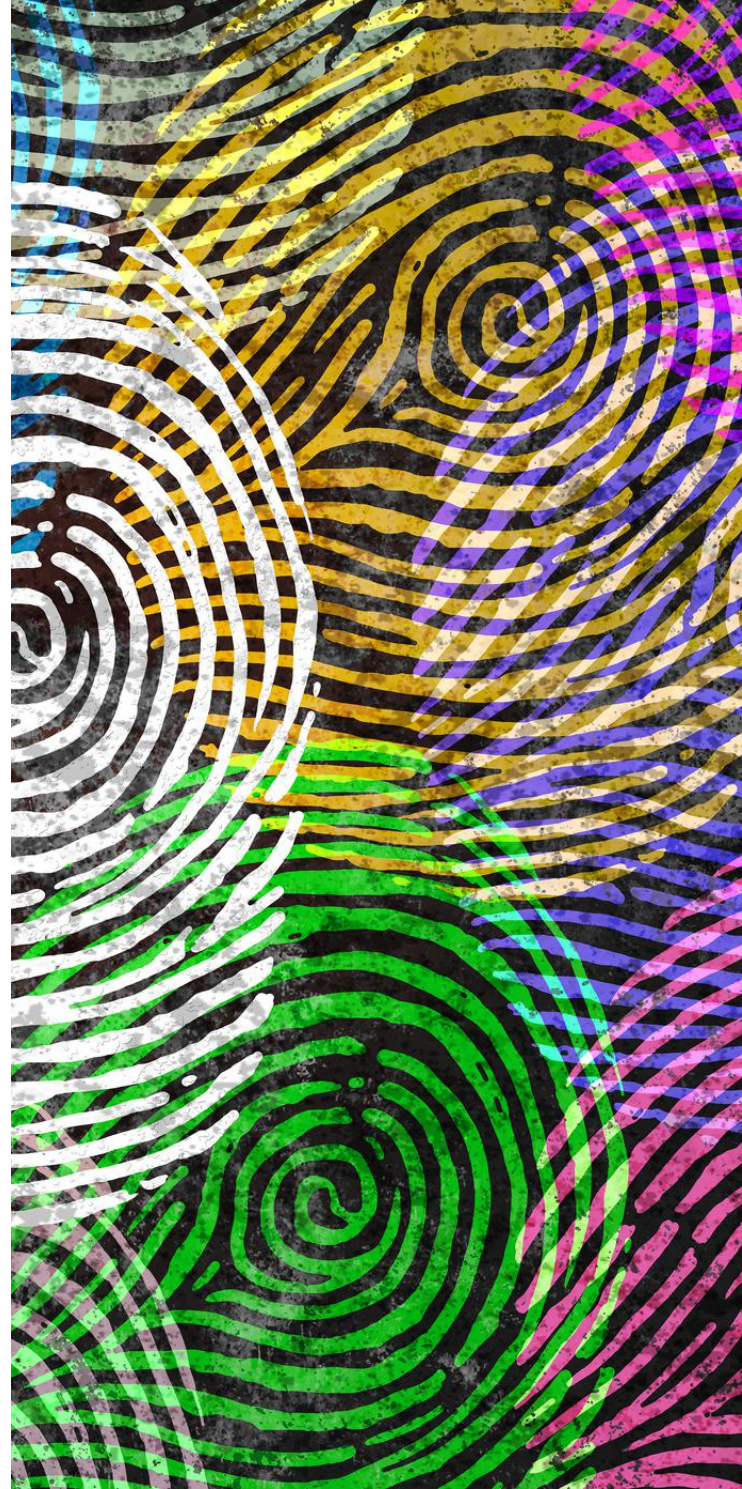
In terms of what we look for in life, we all have similar goals as well: We want to be safe, happy and loved. We may respond to life's circumstances in different ways, but our goals are likely the same at a deep, deep level.

David Eagleman, a neuroscientist and adjunct professor at Stanford University, found that when a group of people would see someone else in pain, the **same neural networks** in the observants' brain would light up, just as if they were experiencing the pain themselves. Moreover, **when the observants considered the other person who was experiencing pain as similar to them, their response to their pain was stronger.** In other words, when we see similarities in others, we're more likely to respond to their pain and suffering with more empathy and sense of connection.

Something shifts in our bodies, minds and hearts whenever we are able to see another person as similar. We are more likely to understand them, put ourselves in their situation and offer a helping hand. By cultivating the ability to see that we are all part of one human family, we can more deeply create connection and decrease separation.

I personally use this "common humanity" practice before a big presentation at work. It not only calms me down, but it also helps me see people in my audience as similar, which decreases the worry that they're there to judge me.

Feel free to explore and practice seeing similarities in another person. Notice if anything shifts in your relationship. On the next page you will find a quick and easy practice that can help you see similarities and offer kindness to others.



"Something shifts in our bodies, minds and hearts whenever we are able to see another person as similar. We are more likely to understand them, put ourselves in their situation and offer a helping hand."



LET'S #PRACTICEKINDNESS

To develop more empathy and compassion in our lives, we can start where it's easiest: with those who are closest to us, including our family members, loved ones, closest friends and work colleagues. Starting with these easy-to-love people, we can more easily learn how to see similarities and offer kindness. If we build this habit with the people in our inner circles, we can then extend the practice outward to those who may have different backgrounds, experiences and beliefs or even to where there's conflict in our lives or in the world.

Let's begin:

1. Take three deep breaths as you start bringing someone to your mind.

2. Repeat to yourself in silence:

"This other person is a human being, just like me.

This person has a body and mind, emotions, fears and hopes, just like me.

This person has gone through difficult and through happy times, just like me."

3. Notice what may shift in your body as you become aware of these and other similarities you may have with this person.

At this point, you may also offer positive thoughts or wishes, such as "I hope you have a nice day." We suggest doing this practice anywhere you can. Try it this week with colleagues, quietly on your own and especially anywhere in your life where conflict needs to be reduced or tensions addressed.

May you see in others what helps you create more connection.



LISTEN TO ONE OF OUR TEACHERS AS SHE DOES THE FULL SEEING SIMILARITIES AND OFFERING KINDNESS PRACTICE FROM SEARCH INSIDE YOURSELF PROGRAM.

LINK: [BIT.DO/JUST-LIKE-ME](https://bit.ly/just-like-me)



**“Love is the power to
see similarity in the
dissimilar.”**

THEODOR W. ADORNO

COMPASSION: KEY TO RESILIENCE



What if, just like strengthening a muscle or learning a new hobby, we could train ourselves to be more compassionate and calm in the face of others' suffering? This is the question that researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison posed in a recent study, titled “[Visual Attention to Suffering After Compassion Training Is Associated With Decreased Amygdala Responses](#).” And their findings suggest that as little as two weeks of compassion meditation training can alter the way people respond to the suffering of others.

Resilience—the ability to skillfully cope with adversity, challenge and crisis—is essential to our emotional well-being. It enables us to recover from trauma of any kind—small struggles or life-changing circumstances. It also helps us respond empathetically to others in need, as opposed to averting our gaze, panicking or losing hope.

In the study, 24 participants practiced either 30 minutes of compassion meditation or reappraisal training (reframing personally stressful events to diminish negative emotions) once a day for two weeks.

The compassion meditation group practiced what’s commonly called a loving-kindness meditation (see page 6), a simple meditation that involves directing well wishes and compassion toward other people (as well as ourselves). This powerful practice typically focuses inward with ourselves initially, then moves to loved ones and finally toward people we don’t know. This kind of loving-kindness meditation is a little like exercising a muscle, gradually increasing the “weight” in terms of the relationships as our compassion expands.



We often think of compassion as an innate trait. You're either compassionate, or you're not. But what if compassion was actually more like confidence, happiness or tranquility—all traits that we can develop with *practice*.

Before and after the two-week training, all of the participants received brain scans. In the scanner, they viewed both evocative images of people suffering and neutral images of people. Participants were told to apply their training, so those who had learned loving kindness directed compassion toward the individuals, such thoughts as "May this person be happy and free from suffering," while the reappraisal group remade the situation by thinking, "This person is an actor and isn't really suffering."

Results came via eye-tracking technology, which noted where people focused on an image, whether it was looking at the least emotionally charged areas of images or directly at the person suffering, and for how long. This time was compared to the time spent looking at the socially relevant areas (i.e. faces) in the neutral photos.

Because the group that practiced loving-kindness meditation tended to look more directly at the images with suffering and also showed less activity in the areas of the brain associated with emotional distress, results suggest that compassion training could help people be more compassionate and calm in the face of suffering.

Developing more kindness and compassion will help you improve your relationships with others, both personally and professionally. Have you ever met someone who was so warm and compassionate that you couldn't help but respond in kind? When others sense that you care about them, they'll naturally care about you in return.

Moreover, a compassionate life is simply more enjoyable to live than a self-centered one. It's counter-intuitive, but one of the best things you could do for your own well-being is develop your sense of care for others.

At SIYLI, we use a practice called the SBNRR for dealing with triggers, which is useful in situations where we encounter negative or distressing emotions. It is a mnemonic device to help remember each of the five steps you can find on the next page.

"We often think of compassion as an innate trait. You're either compassionate, or you're not. But what if compassion was actually more like confidence, happiness or tranquility—all traits that we can develop with practice."



LET'S #PRACTICEKINDNESS

STOP

Whenever you feel triggered, stop. Pausing at the onset of a trigger is a powerful and important skill. Do not react in any way for a moment. This moment is known as “the sacred pause,” and it could well be the most important part of every conversation you have.

BREATHE

By focusing our mind on the breath, we strengthen the sacred pause. In addition, taking deep breaths calms the body and mind.

NOTICE

Experience your emotion by bringing attention to your body. What does it feel like in the body? Try to analyze the emotion as simply a physiological phenomenon, not an existential phenomenon.

REFLECT

Where is the emotion coming from? Is there history behind it? Is there a self-perceived inadequacy involved? Without judging it to be right or wrong, bring this perspective to the situation.

RESPOND

Bring to mind ways you could respond to the situation that would have a positive outcome. Imagine the kindest, most positive response (perhaps it's opposite of where you begin) and then decide how to proceed.





“Kindness is like snow—
it beautifies everything it covers.”

KAHLIL GIBRAN

KINDER LEADERS

Compassion is a critical skill for leaders worldwide. While intuitively many would agree, there's also ample scientific evidence. Many studies have been conducted demonstrating just how crucial compassion is to strong leadership.

For example, researchers from the Australian School of Business conducted a leadership study with over 5,600 participants from 77 different organizations. They found that compassionate leaders consistently boosted employee productivity, employee morale and bottom-line profitability.

"Compassionate leaders consistently boosted employee productivity, employee morale and bottom-line profitability."

So how do you become a compassionate leader? A leader who inspires action and respect? According to Thupten Jinpa, a well-respected scholar and the Dalai Lama's longtime English translator, there are three core pillars:



1. Cognitive Understanding

In order to lead, you need to conceptually understand the problems, situations and decisions your peers and employees are facing. People around you want to know that you "get" their challenges. You know the facts. Without a solid cognitive understanding of what's going on, team members won't be able to connect with you around their projects and problems.

2. Affective (Emotional) Understanding

Yet facts alone aren't enough. The people you lead also want to know that you feel what they feel. That you understand them on an emotional level. Does your team feel stressed out? Are they excited about the projects they're working on? Do they feel like they're growing professionally, or are they feeling bored with their work?

Understanding how your team feels doesn't necessarily mean circumstances have to change. It's okay to be stressed temporarily if it's in service of a greater goal that everyone is committed to. Your team just wants to know that you understand.

3. Motivational Connection

Finally, the people on your team want to know that you want them to succeed. You've got their back. Their professional and personal development is part of your agenda. Knowing that you have their best interests at heart is a key motivating piece.

The main idea behind all three concepts is the switch in mindset from "me" to "we." It's no longer about the individual, but about the team as a whole. Embracing each of these three pillars will help your team create that sense of unity. Adopting these principles will help you bring people together to go further as a team than an individual can go on their own.



LET'S #PRACTICEKINDNESS

At SIYLI, we believe everyone is a leader. Whether you lead your own life, manage a team, direct a group in your community or take on a leadership role in your family, you're a leader!

What are some actions you can take to be an even kinder leader*?



What might get in the way of this that I can prepare for?

Handwriting practice area with 10 horizontal dotted lines.

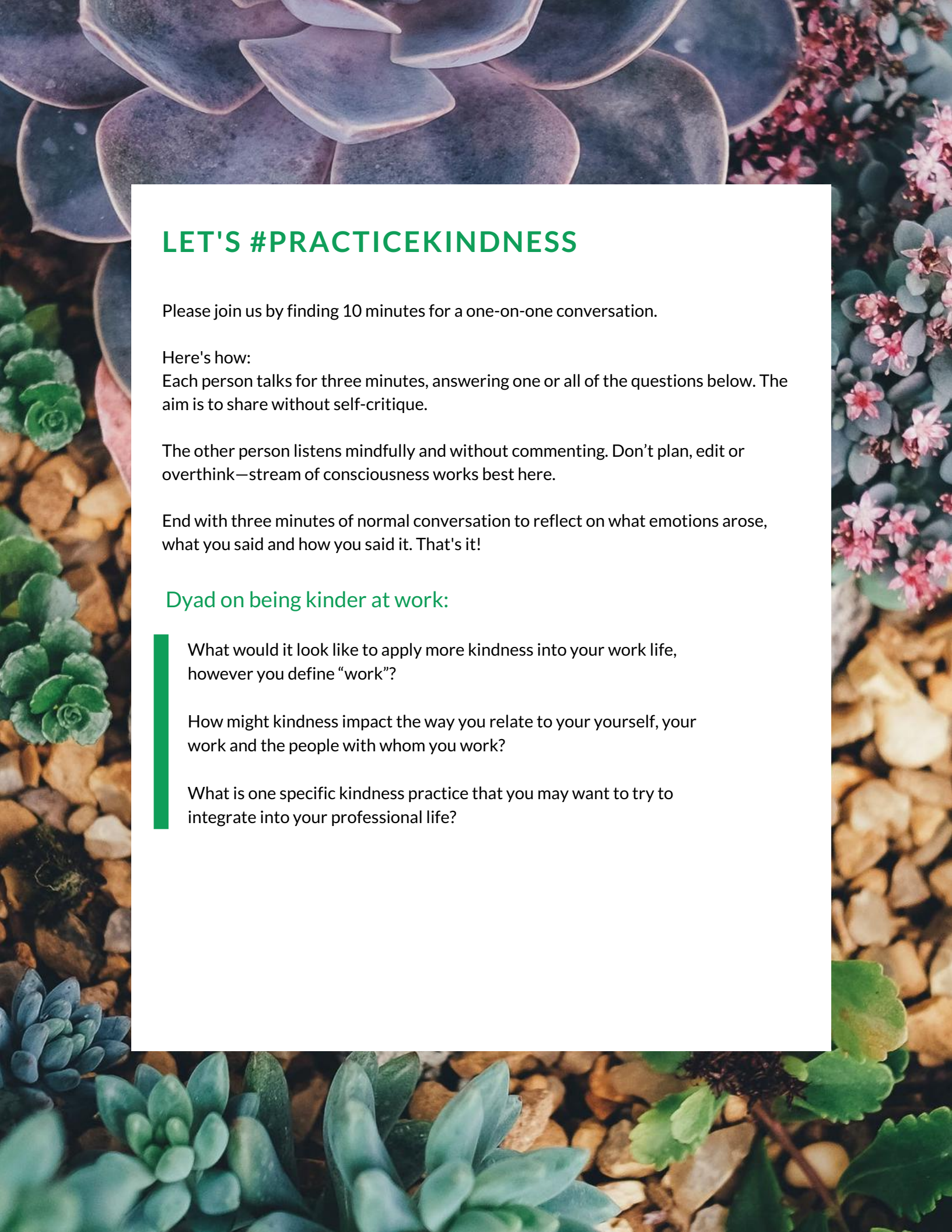
What supports and sustains my capacity to lead with compassion?

Handwriting practice area with 10 horizontal dotted lines.



**“WHEREVER
THERE IS A
HUMAN BEING,
THERE IS AN
OPPORTUNITY
FOR A
KINDNESS.”**

LUCIUS ANNAEUS SENECA



LET'S #PRACTICEKINDNESS

Please join us by finding 10 minutes for a one-on-one conversation.

Here's how:

Each person talks for three minutes, answering one or all of the questions below. The aim is to share without self-critique.

The other person listens mindfully and without commenting. Don't plan, edit or overthink—stream of consciousness works best here.

End with three minutes of normal conversation to reflect on what emotions arose, what you said and how you said it. That's it!

Dyad on being kinder at work:

What would it look like to apply more kindness into your work life, however you define “work”?

How might kindness impact the way you relate to your yourself, your work and the people with whom you work?

What is one specific kindness practice that you may want to try to integrate into your professional life?



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

AESOP

SPREADING KINDNESS

From the most basic exchanges to the deepest conversations, kindness is a contagion of emotion that spreads quickly through social networks. Its impact can vary from fleeting to life changing, and sociologist Nicholas Christakis of Yale University has studied this phenomenon in depth. For example, his research shows that people who become happier in life, increase the odds of a nearby friend also becoming happier by 25 percent.

In this scenario, a spouse's happiness potential increases by 8 percent, and the next-door neighbors will be lucky to see a 34 percent increase in odds.

"Everyday interactions we have with other people are definitely contagious, in terms of happiness," says Christakis in regard to [his findings](#), which were studied by mapping 5,000 people in one town for more than 20 years. Christakis explains, "We were able to show that as one person became happy or sad, it rippled through the network."

Similar, albeit less uplifting, research finds that [other emotions, such as sadness, are equally contagious](#).

Spreading Kindness via Social Media

Direct interaction with a person is one thing, but do our moods affect larger social networks outside of in-person interactions as easily? In a nutshell, yes. A massive [experiment with 700,000 Facebook users](#) demonstrated that emotional states are quickly transferred to others without other people even realizing a change in their moods.

[Another study, with data from millions of Facebook users](#), followed how rainfall influenced the emotional content of social media posts and the contagious effect of those posts on others in areas not experiencing rainfall.

Why not spread kindness throughout your network and watch it ripple outward?



LET'S #PRACTICEKINDNESS

One way to spread kindness is with an intentional **act of kindness**. Here are a few ideas that you can put into practice today:

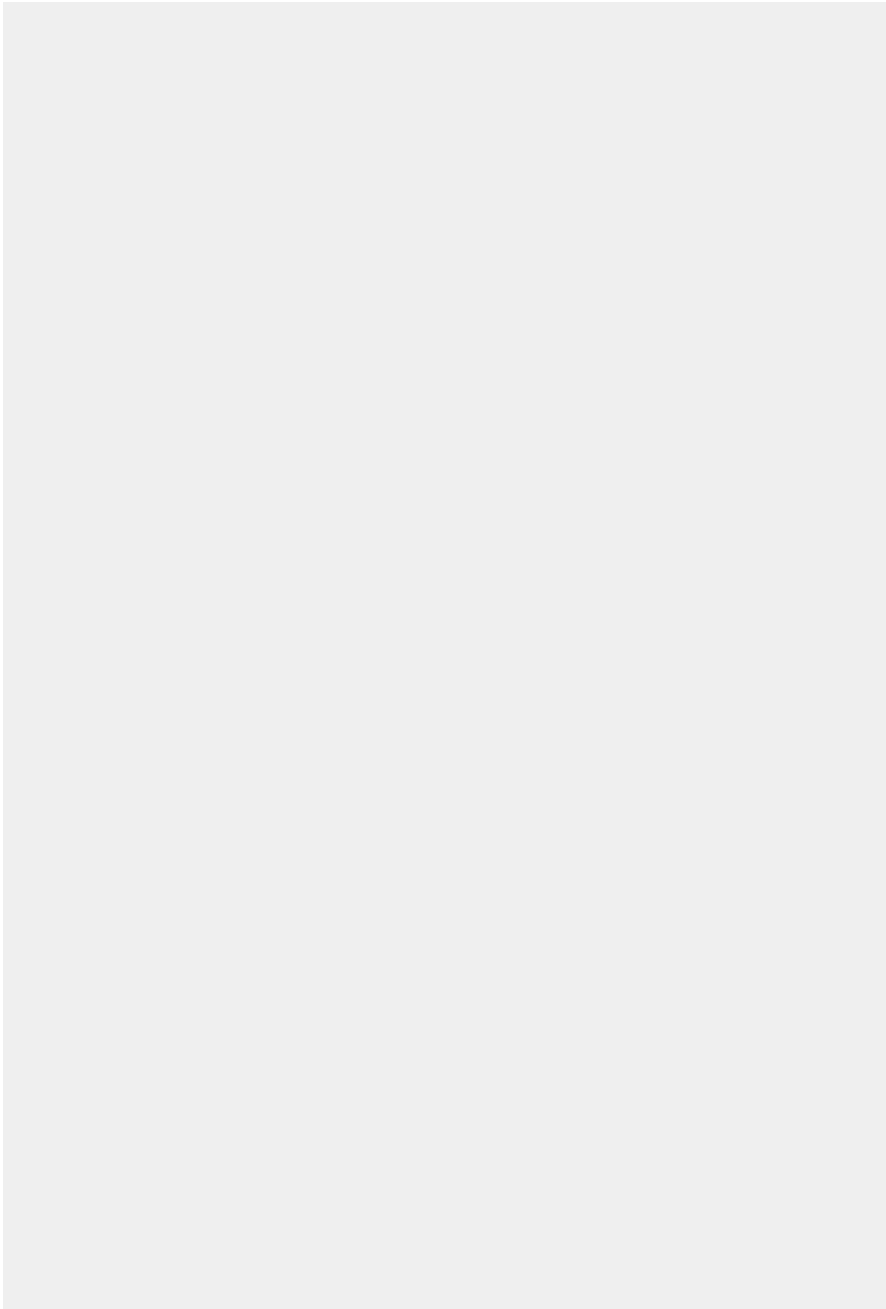
- Write down someone's best qualities and share it with them
- Pay for the coffee of the next person in line
- Leave quarters at the laundromat
- Wheel in your neighbor's garbage
- Write a positive comment on a website or blog
- Praise a local business online
- Give a thank you card to your boss or team members
- Choose a random GoFundMe to donate to
- Pay the toll for the driver behind you
- Buy your waiter/waitress dessert
- Put a coin in an expired meter
- Cook someone a meal
- Leave a poem somewhere around town
- Offer to order a friend or colleague food delivery when they are extra busy
- Put your phone away when talking to someone
- Share what you appreciate about a colleague
- Buy a book for someone at work based on their interests
- Let someone merge into traffic with a wave and a smile
- Offer to walk a neighbor's dog
- Offer to cover for someone at work while they or their children are sick
- Make eye contact with a homeless person or stranger on the street and smile
- Take time to appreciate the sunrise or sunset
- Call an old friend or relative you haven't talked to in a long time and tell them how much they mean to you

**“DO THINGS FOR
PEOPLE NOT
BECAUSE OF WHO
THEY ARE OR
WHAT THEY DO IN
RETURN, BUT
BECAUSE OF WHO
YOU ARE.”**

HAROLD S. KUSHNER

LET'S #PRACTICEKINDNESS

Write ONE way you'd like introduce more kindness into your life:





**“A single act of kindness
throws out roots in all
directions, and the roots spring
up and make new trees.”**

AMELIA EARHART



LET'S #PRACTICEKINDNESS

WISHING WELL

Now you have an opportunity to craft your own compassion phrases. Take a moment to consider the needs and desires of your loved ones and if possible, all beings.

Complete the following phrases:

May you live with.....

May you be.....

May you be free from....

May you think....

May you remember....

May you be filled with.....

May you be held in....

May you feel....

May you know....

May you....

Reread what you wrote and select the 3-5 phrases that most resonate for you, becoming your own practice to spread compassion.

May you be well.
May you be happy.
May you be at ease.
May you #PracticeKindness.



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