The importance of kindness

The value of kindness is embraced by all religions. For example:

✦ Judaism teaches that the world is built on kindness, and the Jewish concept of a mitzvah is used colloquially to mean a good deed or an act of kindness.
✦ In Buddhism, one of the Ten Perfections is mettā which is usually translated into English as loving-kindness.
✦ One of the first traditions of behavior passed down to Muslim children is the seminal doctrine, “Have mercy to those on earth, and the one in heaven shall have mercy upon you.”
✦ Jesus’s parable of the Good Samaritan who helped a stranger in need is known by non-Christians as well as Christians.

Research has shown that acts of kindness benefit the giver as well as the receiver. When you are kind, hormones and neurotransmitters are released into your brain, your cardio-vascular system and throughout your body, warding off aging while making you happier and healthier. What side effects!

David R. Hamilton, author of Why Kindness is Good for You, puts forth the 21-day kindness challenge: Do one act of kindness every day for three weeks. Make a cup of tea for someone, pay a compliment, do something thoughtful and unexpected for another. After three weeks of this, notice how you feel.

Will you accept that challenge? If you are up for it but short on ideas, just Google random acts of kindness ideas. You will have hundreds of ideas at your fingertips instantly. Once you perform two or three, you will find you no longer need a list of suggestions to prompt you into action. Ideas on how to be kind will race into your head – directly from your very own heart.

Prayer: Grant me, God, eyes to see opportunities to be kind. Give me ears to hear others’ needs. Soften my heart. Help me include kind acts in my behavior every day. Amen.

Practical Guide to the Affordable Care Act

Top things for families with children to know

✦ Job-based insurance plans and individual insurance plans can no longer exclude someone under 19 because of a pre-existing condition or disability.
✦ Insurance companies can no longer impose lifetime dollar limits on most benefits you receive.
✦ If your children are under age 26, you can generally insure them if your policy allows for dependent coverage. (The only exception is if you have an existing job-based plan and your children can get their own job-based coverage.)
✦ Starting in 2014, pregnancy and newborn care will be covered.
✦ Starting in 2014, vision and dental coverage for children will be covered.
✦ In 2014, if your income is less than the equivalent of about $88,000 for a family of four today and your job doesn’t offer affordable coverage, you may get tax credits to help pay for insurance.

Healthcare.gov is the source for the above information. Please refer to that site for further explanation and clarification.


Other helpful resources: advocatehealth.com, Campaign for Better Health Care (cbhconline.org), Illinois Maternal & Child Health Coalition (ilmaternal.org) and for suburban Cook County, AgeOptions (ageoptions.org).

March focus: people currently without insurance