

MODULE

1

**THE SCIENCE
OF KINDNESS**



MODULE 1

The Science of Kindness

MODULE OVERVIEW

In addition to the student learning objectives listed below, the intended outcome of Module 1 is to activate students' curiosity about kindness by framing it in the context of scientific inquiry. Knowing that all students have unique experiences and associations with the concept of kindness, evidence-based, scientific inquiry provides an objective and safe environment for students to consider and test kind acts. Being able to separate a kind act from personal identity allows students to experience the benefits of kindness with lower risk and vulnerability.

In Module 1, students are introduced to the concept of kindness from a scientific, evidence-based perspective and have the opportunity to identify their own associations, beliefs, and experiences about kindness. Finally, they're empowered to add their own research when they're prompted with a real research question (the Big Question) to close the module.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will understand that there is a scientific basis for understanding kindness.
- Students will understand that certain skills and attitudes can increase or support kind acts.
- Students will understand that different individuals have unique associations and experiences with the word "kindness".
- Students will understand that scientific inquiry can lead to new discoveries.

STANDARDS AND CORE COMPETENCY MAPPING

- (CASEL) Self-Awareness: Identifying Emotions
- (NGSS) Ask questions that can be investigated and predict reasonable outcomes based on patterns such as cause and effect relationships.
- (NGSS) Read and comprehend grade-appropriate complex texts and/or other reliable media to summarize and obtain scientific and technical ideas and describe how they are supported by evidence.



Estimated Total Time

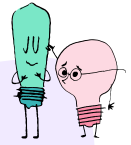
30-40 minutes

Module 1 consists of two parts that can be completed in one session or broken out over a few days.



Materials

- Student Journals
([pdf download](#) | [copy Google Slides](#))
- The Science of Kindness Slideshow
([pdf download](#) | [copy Google Slides](#))
- White Board/Smartboard or Digital Presentation Tool (for slideshow)



FACILITATION TIPS

Most of Module 1 is designed to be facilitated with the whole group, with opportunities for small group discussion and individual reflection and response noted throughout.

If you are facilitating virtually, Parts 1 and 2 can be completed:

- *Synchronously:* Over two to three whole group virtual sessions.
- *Asynchronously:* Facilitated through video introduction and presentation, with discussions through platforms like Flipgrid, Google Docs, or other discussion board or video platforms.
- See the “Natural Breaks” included throughout the module for additional implementation flexibility.

Note: See *Teacher Rx, Section 2* for student accessibility tips.

Reflection Options: Throughout the module you will see a number of opportunities for students to reflect on their learning. These opportunities are included in the Student Journals, but you may choose to facilitate reflection in a variety of ways. Consider small group discussions, exit tickets, recorded responses, discussion boards, and others. Consider the major takeaways you want your students to have, and facilitate reflections accordingly.

PART 1

What Does Kindness Mean to You?



Estimated Total Time
5-10 minutes

SEL Skills: Self-Awareness: Identifying Emotions

1. INTRODUCTION (Whole Group if possible)

Introduce Learn Kind to students, and tell them that over the next several weeks or months your class will explore kindness from a scientific perspective, even researching the effects of kindness themselves (if you choose to do Module 6).

Tell students: “We’re going to look at current research in a moment, but before we do, let’s talk about this word *kindness*.”

2. DISCUSSION

The word *kindness* means something different to each student. Some students will have very positive associations with the concept, while others may hear the word and shut down. This discussion is intended to help you uncover the existing associations, misconceptions, and potential barriers that will inform your students’ initial and ongoing response to their learning experiences. It will also validate their voice and experience and continue to cultivate a safe classroom community.

First Response: Have each student answer the following two questions in their journal. Before you ask each question, tell your students to close their eyes so they can really concentrate on their actual responses (not the ones they think they should have). Let them know that no response is wrong. Then ask them:

1. What’s the first thing you think of when you hear the word *kindness*?
2. How do you *feel* when you hear someone say “you should be kind”?

Student Pre-Assessment: *This portion of the student journal can serve as the “pre-assessment”, helping you gain insight into students’ understandings and perceptions of kindness before the Learn Kind curriculum begins. You have the option to [share this](#) with [kindness.org](#).*

Natural Break: *If needed, the learning progression can naturally break here, and be continued starting with “Share Out” at another time. If time allows, continue the activity through “Wrap-Up”.*

3. SHARE OUT

In the whole group, small/breakout groups, or discussion boards, have students share their responses with each other. Some suggested follow-up questions are:

- Were you surprised by your responses?
- What do you think is behind that response? (beliefs or experiences)
- What do you think kindness means?

4. WRAP-UP

Close the discussion by validating students' experiences and opinions, and tell them that it's interesting how diverse life experiences (and even personality) can contribute to different associations with the same concept. Fortunately, we don't have to rely on just our experiences or beliefs. Kindness is something we can actually study! A large body of research tells us about the impact of kindness on our brains, bodies, and emotions.

PART 2

The Science of Kindness and the Big Question



Estimated Total Time
20-25 minutes

1. INTRODUCTION (Whole Group if possible)

Now that students have had the opportunity to access their own perceptions of kindness, it's time to explore what scientific research has revealed.

2. REVIEW AND DISCUSS

Remind students of their discussion in Part 1 and ask several students to share how they would define kindness.

3. PRESENT SCIENCE OF KINDNESS

Remind students that kindness is something that can be/has been studied using scientific inquiry and research. Using the provided [slideshow](#), walk students through an overview of the scientific perspective of kindness and what scientists have discovered about kindness from research.

Guide students to record the definition of kindness in their journals, along with facts and findings that stand out to them, and any questions that arise.

Natural Break: If needed, the learning progression can naturally break here and be continued starting with the "Student Discussion" at a later time. If time allows, continue the activity through "The Big Question".

4. STUDENT DISCUSSION & REFLECTION

Following the presentation, lead students through an individual reflection or group discussion using the following questions:

- Which of those facts stood out to you?
- What other kindness studies should be done?
- Do any questions come to mind now that you've seen these facts?

5. THE BIG QUESTION (Whole Group if possible)

Tell students that while research has shown us a lot about the impact of kindness from a scientific perspective, there's much we still don't know. For example, studies suggest that kind acts have a positive impact not only on the person receiving the act, but also on the person *doing* the act.

Say: "But we don't have many studies that show **if kindness affects the happiness of kids.**"

Tell students that they are going to take on the role of scientists and conduct experiments that will help discover whether or not it does.

Say: Here's the Big Question we will answer together: **"Does being kind make us happy?"**

Have students record this question in their journal.

Congratulations! You've reached the end of Module 1.

Choose Kindness Now

When it comes down to it, kindness is a choice – and a choice we can make over and over again. Use this simple step-by-step tool at the end of every module, or as often as needed to help students strengthen their internal kindness muscles. Since science tells us kindness is contagious, every choice can create ripples of positive impact.

① **CHOOSE** your kind act from the list below (or choose your own!)

② **PLAN** the WHO, WHEN, and WHERE for your act

WHO – Do it for a friend, family member, teacher, or yourself

WHEN – Choose when you will do the act (maybe it's right now!)

WHERE – Where will you do it? School, home, or somewhere else?

③ **DO** your kind act!

④ **OBSERVE** what happened and how you feel

⑤ **(Optional) SHARE** with the class next time you meet

☐ Invite someone to something

☐ Help someone with schoolwork

☐ Pick up litter or trash

☐ Smile at someone

☐ Give someone a compliment

☐ Thank someone for something they did

☐ Help with a chore you don't normally do

☐ Draw a picture for someone

☐ Go outside and enjoy nature

☐ Take a mindful moment for yourself