

Happy New
Year!!!



As we enter 2015, I wanted to share some interesting articles that have very practical applications.

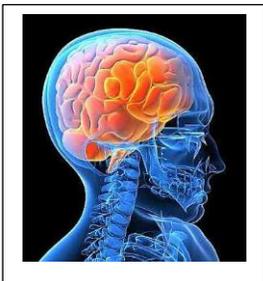
1st: Great article by Jonice Webb on simple psychological discoveries that have easy fixes!

2nd: An article about teaching kindness, that in my opinion perfectly aligns perfectly with our PBIS program that promotes a positive culture.

Hope you enjoy these articles and find the ideas useful!!!!

The Four Greatest Psychological Discoveries of 2014

By Jonice Webb



Every day of every year, scientists toil away in their efforts to understand the workings of the human mind. What makes us happy? How do our emotions work? What should we be doing differently in our lives to make ourselves healthier, happier and stronger? Each year, a few studies stand out as particularly helpful by outlining a clear path to accomplish a better and healthier life; studies that everyone should know about. Here are four such studies from the year 2014. I hope they will help you to shape your coming year.

1. We look for happiness in all the wrong places:

We typically think of major life events, raises, large purchases, and success as the main sources of happiness in our lives. But a Harvard University study by Zhang, et al., 2014 shows that we are overlooking a powerful and readily available font of happiness: the small things that happen from day to day. In this study, students were asked to place 5 mundane items that represented their daily lives in a time capsule, and to predict how much happiness it would bring them to see these items 3 months later. The students drastically under-predicted the joy they actually felt when the time capsules were opened.

The Implication: Pay more attention to the small things that happen in your daily life. Small sources of joy are powerful.

2. The mind/body connection: 2014 was the Year for Mindfulness.

The concept of mindfulness has gradually morphed from simply “being in the moment” to a more complex definition: “being aware of your own thoughts and feelings in the moment.” This new way of viewing mindfulness has opened doors to new areas of research. In 2014, study after study has shown that mindful people are better off in a variety of different ways. In fact, higher emotional self-awareness has been found to improve your overall health. A Brown University Study by Loucks, et al., 2014 showed that people who are more aware of what they are

thinking and feeling in the moment have lower BMI (body mass index), lower fasting glucose, less smoking and higher levels of physical activity.

The Implication: We should all work on being more aware of what we are thinking and feeling in the moment, and why.

3. **There is a simple way to fight your own negativity and anxiety:**

Negative, obsessive thinking is a common part of many emotional and psychological problems. A new study by Nota & Coles, 2014 offers an option to try if you would like to reduce your own negative thinking patterns. These researchers found a clear connection between going to bed late at night, inadequate sleep, and excessive negative1/8/2015 The Four Greatest Psychological Discoveries of 2014 | Childhood Emotional Neglect <http://blogs.psychcentral.com/childhood-neglect/2014/12/the-four-greatest-psychological-discoveries-of-2014/#.VKLP3accGe8.mailto> 2/3thinking/worrying.

More studies are planned, but in the meantime, it makes sense to try this relatively easy fix.

The Implication: Try going to bed earlier and work toward getting 8 hours of sleep per night, and see if it helps reduce your negative, anxiety-driven thinking patterns.

4. **People who treat themselves with compassion feel better about themselves and their bodies:**

A 2014 study by Kelly et al., 2014 found that women who treat themselves with more kindness and compassion are better able to cope with disappointments and setbacks in life. They were also less reactive to other people's judgments or criticisms of their body shape and size.

The Implication: If you are kind to yourself in the face of your own mistakes and flaws, you will be a stronger and more resilient person overall.

Why Teaching Kindness in Schools Is Essential to Reduce Bullying

OCTOBER 17, 2014

 [Share](#) 3.7K



Phrases like "random acts of kindness" and "pay it forward" have become popular terms in modern society. Perhaps this could be best explained by those who have identified a deficiency in their lives that can only be fulfilled by altruism.

It seems that we just can't get enough of those addictive, feel-good emotions -- and with good reason. Scientific studies prove that kindness has many physical, emotional, and mental health benefits. And children need a healthy dose of the warm-and-fuzzies to thrive as healthy, happy, well-rounded individuals.

[Patty O'Grady, PhD](#), an expert in neuroscience, emotional learning, and positive psychology, specializes in education. She reports:

Kindness changes the brain by the experience of kindness. Children and adolescents do not learn kindness by only thinking about it and talking about it. Kindness is best learned by feeling it so that they can reproduce it.

A great number of benefits have been reported to support teaching kindness in schools, best summed up by the following.

Happy, Caring Children

The good feelings that we experience when being kind are produced by endorphins. They activate areas of the brain that are associated with pleasure, social connection, and trust. These feelings of joyfulness are proven to be contagious and encourage more kind behavior (also known as [altruism](#)) by the giver and recipient.

Increased Peer Acceptance

Research on the subject has determined that kindness increases our ability to form meaningful connections with others. Kind, happy children enjoy [greater peer acceptance](#) because they are well liked. Better-than-average mental health is reported in classrooms that practice more inclusive behavior due to an even distribution of popularity.

Greater Sense of Belonging and Improved Self-Esteem

[Studies show](#) that people experience a "helper's high" when they do a good deed. This rush of endorphins creates a lasting sense of pride, wellbeing, and an enriched sense of belonging. It's reported that even small acts of kindness heighten our sense of wellbeing, increase energy, and give a wonderful feeling of optimism and self worth.

Improved Health and Less Stress

Being kind can trigger a release of the hormone oxytocin, which has [a number of physical and mental health benefits](#). Oxytocin can significantly increase a person's level of happiness and reduce stress levels. It also protects the heart by lowering blood pressure and reducing free radicals and inflammation, which incidentally speed up the aging process.

Increased Feelings of Gratitude

When children are part of projects that help others less fortunate than themselves, it provides them with a real sense of perspective. Helping someone else makes them appreciate the good things in their own lives.

Better Concentration and Improved Results

Kindness is a key ingredient that helps children feel good about themselves as it [increases serotonin levels](#). This important chemical affects learning, memory, mood, sleep, health, and digestion. Having a positive outlook enables greater attention spans and more creative thinking to produce better results at school.

Reduced Depression

Dr. Wayne Dyer, an internationally-renowned author and speaker, says that an act of kindness triggers an increase in serotonin, a natural chemical responsible for improving mood. This boost in happiness occurs not only in both the giver and receiver of kindness, but also in anyone who witnesses it. [This makes kindness a powerful, natural antidepressant.](#) (PDF, 14KB)

Less Bullying

Shanetia Clark and Barbara Marinak are Penn State Harrisburg faculty researchers. They say, "Unlike previous generations, today's adolescents are victimizing each other at alarming rates." They argue that adolescent bullying and violence can be confronted with in-school programs that integrate "[kindness -- the antithesis of victimization](#)." Many traditional anti-bullying programs focus on the negative actions that cause anxiety in children. When kindness and compassion are taught instead, it fosters the positive behavior that's expected. Promoting its psychological opposite is key in reducing bullying to create warm and inclusive school environments.