

## Random Acts of Kindness for the New Year

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In the midst of what will most likely be a barrage of New Year's resolutions and self-improvement articles, I am hoping that this one would stand out a bit. Given the typical success rate of New Year's resolutions, I may be overly optimistic, but for 2010 I'm looking at making changes that have a wider impact on our community. I've written before about the multi-faceted value of committing random acts of kindness, but the rippling effects of these acts are so powerful that I couldn't resist making them a part of this year's challenge for 2010.

One of the coolest things about random acts of kindness is that they get easier, even becoming habitual, the more they are practiced. I'm hoping all of you will take on my challenge over the next year, causing waves of kindness that wash back over you regularly. The following are some random acts of kindness suggestions that I've gathered over the years from some of the kindest people I know:

- **Take the time to genuinely compliment someone.** Recently, I was at the pharmacy picking up prescriptions. When I complimented the pharmacist technician—telling him how the service I received from that particular pharmacy was always delivered in such a cheerful, efficient, fast, and helpful manner — he seemed overwhelmed. He said that my compliment made his day. A sincere compliment can go a long way for people in direct service roles, since they so often hear only the complaints and frustrations of their clientele.
- **Increase positive energy.** This can be as simple as passing on a joke to a fellow member of your community, or walking away from negativity and gossip instead of participating.

- **Be thoughtful.** In the fast food times we live in, baking obviously takes time and thoughtfulness, especially if you make a person's favorite food and surprise them with it. It's also a low-cost way of making someone's day!
- **Surprise someone with something they like.** Not that long ago, I was having a really bad day. One of my colleagues noticed and surprised me with a fancy cup of coffee (one of my favorite pick-me-ups). It totally made my week!
- **Give someone with a small, thoughtful gift.** For instance, one of my co-workers collects bears. She would likely be pleasantly surprised by a new one for her collection.
- **Do random favors.** Pick up friends' kids and babysit them so that the hardworking parents can take some time for themselves. One of my co-workers explained that she and her husband often take their nieces and nephews on a moment's notice to give the adults a break — another low-cost/no-cost random act of kindness.
- **Make it anonymous.** As I was asking about others' favorite random acts of kindness, a colleague mentioned that such acts have a whole new dimension of fun when they are done anonymously. She said that she has had anonymous gifts left in her mailbox; this gives her an optimistic feeling about the good in all people.
- **Fulfill a need.** This year, on the Child and Family Services team at Arapahoe/Douglas Mental Health Network, a multitude of donations made the holidays special for kids who normally would not have received gifts. Especially during the challenging times we are facing as a nation, there are always areas of need to which we can donate.
- **Unexpectedly take care of someone when they least expect it.** One of my best examples of this is the de-icing and "de-snowing" the cars of co-workers or patrons. It's so comforting to leave work after a long hard day, enter the dark cold parking lot, and realize that there's one less chore to do before you get home.

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- **Treat someone who really needs it.** I just heard the story of one of our student mentors who was out in the community with a young person and accidentally found themselves at a coffee shop counter without the means to buy a a treat on a really cold day. A woman overheard the situation and insisted on purchasing items for both the mentor and the young person. The student and mentor are now currently planning on paying the random act of kindness forward to someone. A simple variation of this act is paying for the person's order behind you at the drive-through.

For further ideas on random acts of kindness, visit [operationnice.com](http://operationnice.com)

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#### **About Arapahoe/Douglas Mental Health Network (ADMHN)**

ADMHN is a private, nonprofit 501 © (3) corporation providing professional, comprehensive behavioral health care and substance abuse treatment primarily, but not exclusively, in Arapahoe and Douglas counties. We offer programs for adults, seniors, families, couples and children. These services include counseling, psychiatry, crisis services, case management, substance abuse treatment, victim services, an adult acute treatment unit, adult supported and residential housing, services to the criminal justice system, vocational and social rehabilitation, a day treatment therapeutic school and school-based services. Arapahoe/Douglas Mental Health Network has an on-site pharmacy. We offer community education, wellness programs and a Speakers Bureau. Learn more at [admhn.org](http://admhn.org).

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