Why kindness is good for you

Talking to myself about kindness:

**I:** Have you read David Hamilton’s book, “Why Kindness is Good for You”?  
**Me:** No. Who is David Hamilton?

**I:** Well, in 1995 he started out as a scientist in the pharmaceutical industry, developing new drugs. But he left his job in 1999. Now he spends most of his time writing books, giving talks and leading workshops.  
**Me:** I see that he also has a web site, [www.drdavidhamilton.com](http://www.drdavidhamilton.com).

**I:** Very good, bro. Very good.  
**Me:** Okay, why do you want to know if I’ve read his book?

**I:** Because, if you haven’t, you probably should. He is able to take a subject like kindness and explain in plain words how acts of kindness affect our behavior and our health.  
**Me:** Let me guess. I suppose you are about to say that being kind to others makes us happy, right?

**I:** That’s correct, Slo Mo. In fact, lots of studies have shown that being kind to others does make us happy. You might even say some people get a high from doing good deeds for others, according to Hamilton.  
**Me:** And next you are probably going to say that kindness is contagious.
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I: Right again, my man. Being around kind people and observing kind deeds can make us kinder. This is especially important for children since they naturally copy the behavior of those around them.

Me: Wait. What you just said is very important. So if you want your children or grandchildren to be kind people growing up, you can start today and lead by example, right?

I: Right you are. Say, are you sure you haven’t read David Hamilton’s book?

Me: Of course I have. I was just putting you on. You haven’t even mentioned the studies on oxytocin.

I: You mean the “cuddle” hormone?

Me: Yes. Most folks only know oxytocin as the drug used to induce labor. Or that oxytocin causes the release of milk from the mammary glands in lactating women. But when you perform an act of kindness, especially when it’s face to face with the recipient, the momentary connection releases oxytocin in both of you.

Me: And that elevated level of oxytocin reaches your brain and affects behavior. For example, it increases your trust level so that barriers go down.

I: And when you hug someone, the same thing happens for both huggers.
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Me: Oxytocin also causes our major arteries to relax, which lowers our blood pressure. This protects our cardiovascular system from hypertension. So a hug a day keeps the cardiologist away.

I: Another way to increase the level of oxytocin in your system is to own a pet, according to Hamilton. Stroking a dog or cat raises your oxytocin level and reduces your blood pressure, reduces stress and even wards off depression. The same thing goes for your pet.

Me: Do you want to mention Hamilton’s 21-Day Kindness Challenge?

I: Sure. It goes like this: Do at least one act of kindness every day for 21 days. But first, get a composition book or staple some pieces of paper together to use as a journal. Then record what you did and how it made you feel. Carry out some of your acts anonymously and record how they make you feel. Once you have completed the 21-Day Challenge, keep it up and keep recording how you feel. In addition, pick one day a week and carry out three acts of kindness on that day. Make it a habit. Let this be your kindness day.

Me: Anything else you would like to say about kindness or David Hamilton?

I: One of the side effects of kindness is happiness, both for the giver and the receiver of the act of kindness. Go to Hamilton’s web site and watch the short video of him speaking. It may convince you to make simple acts of kindness a routine part of your daily life.
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