



Kindness as a Strategy to Reduce Antisemitism

What Research and Practice Show

Research in social psychology and education shows that antisemitism persists when Jewish people are treated as distant or abstract and when cruelty is allowed to go unanswered. Studies of antisemitism prevention consistently show that efforts grounded in kindness help reverse these conditions by restoring human connection and shaping expectations about how people treat one another. Over time, this reduces antisemitic attitudes and behaviors by weakening the social and psychological space in which they grow.

The United States of Kindness offers Jewish community leaders a practical way to advance this work by supporting a national effort that encourages humanization and reinforces resistance to hate as a shared civic responsibility.

Effective Antisemitism Prevention Already Uses Kindness Mechanisms

The field of antisemitism prevention already relies on kindness driven strategies, even when the language used is educational or civic rather than moral. Programs that emphasize humanization, moral responsibility, and inclusive social norms are applying kindness deliberately as a tool to reduce antisemitic attitudes and behaviors.¹

Why Kindness Reduces Antisemitism: The Research

- ***Positive Intergroup Contact***

Positive, cooperative interaction between groups reduces prejudice, including antisemitism. Meta analyses show lower endorsement of antisemitic beliefs when Jews are encountered as people rather than symbols or stereotypes.²

Kindness enables this contact by creating respect, curiosity, and emotional safety.

- ***Prosocial Norms Reduce Social Permission for Hate***

Research shows that antisemitism increases when cruelty is tolerated and declines when kindness and respect are reinforced as social norms. When communities publicly model kindness, hate speech decreases and bystander intervention increases.³ The Southern Poverty Law Center documents these effects across community interventions.

Kindness changes what behavior feels permissible.



Kindness as a Strategy to Reduce Antisemitism

What Research and Practice Show

- **Moral Elevation Undermines Dehumanization**

Witnessing acts of kindness or moral courage produces moral elevation, increasing empathy and reducing tolerance for cruelty. Research led by scholars affiliated with the University of Virginia shows this response weakens the emotional distance on which antisemitism depends.⁴

Kindness restores moral connection where hate requires separation.

United States of Kindness

The United States of Kindness aligns closely with the mechanisms shown to reduce antisemitism. By encouraging everyday actions that reinforce human connection and shared responsibility, it supports the same dynamics used in effective antisemitism prevention efforts.

For Jewish Community Relations Councils, supporting and promoting USK offers a way to strengthen antisemitism prevention by:

- Moving beyond condemnation alone
- Reinforcing social norms that reject hate
- Increasing everyday humanization through shared civic action

USK complements existing efforts by addressing the conditions in which antisemitism grows.

Kindness is a critical element in confronting antisemitism and one of the most effective ways to reduce it.

-
1. Facing History & Ourselves. (2018). *Evaluation of Facing History Programs*. Harvard Graduate School of Education. ADL *No Place for Hate* program evaluations report parallel outcomes.
 2. Pettigrew, T. F., & Tropp, L. R. (2006). "A meta analytic test of intergroup contact theory." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 90(5), 751–783. Allport, G. W. (1954). *The Nature of Prejudice*.
 3. Paluck, E. L., Shepherd, H., & Aronow, P. M. (2016). "Changing climates of conflict: A social norms intervention." *American Political Science Review*, 110(1), 127–145.
 4. Haidt, J. (2003). "The moral emotions." In *Handbook of Affective Sciences*. Algor, S. B., & Haidt, J., University of Virginia.