



United States of Kindness

Residence Life and RA Resources

Simple floor activities, discussion prompts, bulletin board ideas, and residence hall kindness challenges that RAs can use without adding a major program.

The goal is not to add another campus program. It is to make welcome and connection more visible in the moments that already shape student life.

Why visible kindness matters

Recent research from Stanford University, published in *Nature Human Behaviour*, found that undergraduates often underestimate the empathy of their peers. In a study of more than 5,000 Stanford undergraduates, students who perceived their peers as more empathetic reported stronger psychological well being and more friendships. Researchers also identified an empathy perception gap: students consistently viewed their peers as less empathetic and caring than those peers viewed themselves.

Residence halls can help close that gap by making everyday care more visible. When students see peers greeting each other, offering practical help, listening well, and including others, they are less likely to assume they are alone and more likely to pass that behavior on.

Use these resources as a menu

- Choose activities that fit the personality and needs of the floor.
- Keep participation voluntary and low pressure.
- Model kindness as inclusion, respect, reliability, and practical help.
- Avoid treating kindness as forced positivity. Residents should still be able to raise concerns and disagree honestly.



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Five minute activities

Name and Notice

At a floor meeting, ask each person to learn the name of someone they have not met and one small detail about them.

One Helpful Thing

Invite each resident to name one practical thing that would make the floor easier or more welcoming.

Quiet Thank You

Give residents two minutes to text or write a thank you to someone who helped them recently.

Common Ground

Pair residents and ask them to find one shared interest and one difference they would like to understand better.

Who Can Help?

Ask residents to identify campus offices, staff members, and peers they can turn to for different kinds of support.

Pass the Credit

Invite residents to recognize someone else on the floor for a small action that mattered.

Quick use tips

- Use one activity at the beginning or end of a regular floor meeting.
- Let residents pass if they do not want to answer.
- Keep the activity focused on practical connection rather than personal disclosure.
- Follow up when a response points to a need, conflict, or safety concern.



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Floor activities

Kindness Chain

Residents write one act of kindness they received, saw, or passed on. Link the strips together and display the chain as it grows.

Doorway Welcome

Residents add a small sign to their door with their name, pronouns if they choose, and one invitation such as Ask me about music or Knock if you need a study break.

Community Care Kit

Create a shared box with campus resource cards, basic supplies, encouragement notes, and practical items residents can take or contribute.

The Open Seat

At one floor meal or event, reserve an open seat and actively invite someone who arrived alone to join.

Kindness Walk Through

Walk the floor together and identify one thing that helps residents feel welcome and one thing that could improve.

Study Support Swap

Residents post subjects they can help with and subjects where they would appreciate support.

Shared Service Hour

Choose one small project such as writing thank you notes to facilities staff, stocking a campus pantry, or cleaning a shared outdoor space.

Reset Conversation

After a conflict or difficult week, use structured prompts to name what happened, what people need, and one action that could rebuild trust.

Discussion prompts

- What makes it easier for you to ask for help?
- What behavior helps a shared space feel respectful?
- How can we include people without putting them on the spot?
- What is the difference between being kind and avoiding a difficult conversation?
- What should we do when someone on the floor seems isolated?
- What is one small agreement that would improve life on this floor?



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Bulletin board ideas

Kindness Is Practical

Feature concrete examples: hold the door, clean up after yourself, lower the volume, learn a name, return a borrowed item, share a campus resource.

You Are Not the Only One

Post common first year worries beside campus resources and short reminders that many students are adjusting.

Caught Being Kind

Provide cards for residents to recognize helpful actions. Allow anonymous recognition and rotate examples weekly.

Need Help? Start Here

Organize support contacts by need: academic, financial, mental health, safety, conflict, food, transportation, and belonging.

The Floor Kindness Menu

List ten actions that take less than ten minutes and cost nothing.

Received. Saw. Passed On.

Create three sections where residents can post short stories of kindness.

Residence hall challenge options

Keep the challenge simple. Do not create a tracking burden.

- Seven Days of Welcome: One small action each day during the first week.
- 250 Acts as a Hall: Invite the residence hall to work collectively toward 250 acts during the semester. Use estimates and stories rather than individual verification.
- Across Floors: Each floor chooses one action for another floor, campus team, or staff group.
- One Month, One Habit: Focus on one shared behavior such as greeting people, cleaning common spaces, or inviting others to meals.
- Pass It On Weekend: Residents complete one act, share it with a peer, and invite that person to continue the chain.