

Put Your Random Acts of Kindness on Schedule

Popular blogger, author, and podcaster Tim Ferriss talks often about the importance of scheduled family vacations in his life. His yearly travel planning doesn't just bring his family together for their time on the road – the expectation of future enjoyment makes the rest of the year sweeter, and the act of planning itself can be fun.

There's a converse principle that applies to vacations and even self-improvement: you can schedule out certain projects or adventures in advance and be pleasantly surprised when they roll around. Waking up one week and realizing that you're soon to fly across the country to be with friends is not a bad way to live. The surprise is part of the value add.

But sometimes you don't just need the pleasure of a vacation or a self-indulgence. Sometimes you need a reminder that your presence is making the world better (even slightly). And you'll never know when exactly you'll need it.

I discovered this Sunday morning. I slept late and moved slower than I should have. I arrived late to my first commitment that morning. I was feeling like a pretty disappointing specimen of a human being.

Fortunately, I remembered that I had committed some of my early afternoon to giving a friend a ride to work.

It's funny how such a small favor I was planning to do for this friend improved my spirits. There's some kind of positive energy that comes from positive action toward other human beings, and I was benefitting from it.

That friend ultimately did me a favor. It's no great new insight to see that doing acts of neighborliness will improve your mood. But maybe you're missing out by not scheduling those acts out for the future. I probably would not have snapped into a zone of kindness or neighborliness on Sunday if I had not already committed to act positively a while before. My advance commitment to action pulled me through to a better mood and more self-respect when I needed it.

There's power to committing to a positive impact long before you can visualize it or even feel the good feels that come from kindness or neighborliness. Your commitments will come to fruition at times you won't necessarily expect. Those are the times you might especially need them.