



How to show some love for your neighbours

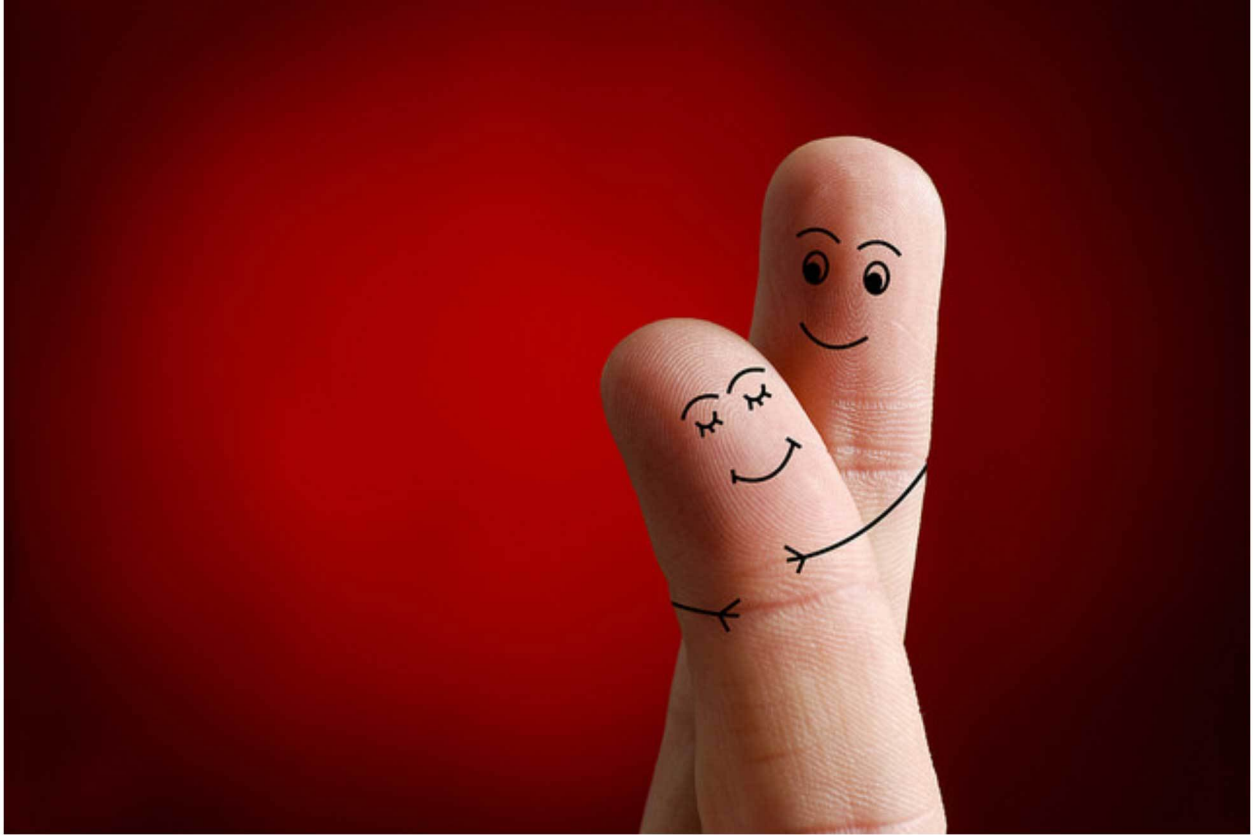
Written by **Kylie Walker**, published on 08 February 2018

You might think that Valentine's Day is all about couples, chocolate and roses – but in fact, it can be a great reminder that sharing some love is something we can all do, whether we're single or partnered.

If January is about fresh starts and resolutions, February is a great month for showing some love. Here are some suggestions for making your neighbours' lives better – and making yourself feel good too!

And don't think you have to do big things to make a difference. As Harvard University professor of psychology Daniel Gilbert says (<https://hbr.org/2012/01/the-science-behind-the-smile>), "Somebody who has a dozen mildly nice things happen each day is likely to be happier than somebody who has a single truly amazing thing happen."

Smile!



Smiling can be contagious! It's a really simple, free, quick way of making other people feel good and it encourages other people to smile

(<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/02/160211140428.htm>), too. Putting on a smile can have big benefits for you as well (<https://www.forbes.com/sites/ericsavitz/2011/03/22/the-untapped-power-of-smiling/#62f3649e7a67>) - research has found that smiling can help us cope with stress (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23012270>) and stimulates reward centres in your brain (one study found that seeing a child smile can stimulate your brain more than eating 2000 chocolate bars (<https://www.scotsman.com/news/one-smile-can-make-you-feel-a-million-dollars-1-738272>) would!).

Do a random act of kindness



Have you heard of Feel Good February (<http://www.feelgoodfeb.org/>)? It's an initiative that's all about making someone else's day better with a random act of kindness ("RAK"). Nabo had a chat to Feel Good February founder, teacher and children's book author (<http://www.lindalokhee.com/>) Linda Pang, about how we can help our friends and neighbours - even the ones we don't know.

"Acts of kindness can lift a bad mood, make a person feel valued and create a smile on their face. And a random act of kindness? The element of surprise and kindness from a total stranger just adds to that, and makes kindness feel 100 per cent better!" Pang says.

"There are lots of ways how individuals can help brighten a neighbour's day, some don't even cost you anything! For example, when you're walking your dog, stop when you see someone - smile and have a chat, even if you don't know them, and even if they don't have a dog! Taking the time to talk to others is really important for our mental health.

"Offer to carry supermarket groceries to their car for an elderly person or a Mum or Dad with lots of kids at your local grocery store.

"Get some chalk and draw smiley faces on the pavement at the entrance of your local swimming pool. I did this at my local pool, on the day of a school swimming carnival, so that when kids came out, they'd look down and smile."

A little gift can also be lovely, she says.

"Another way to brighten a neighbour's day could be to buy some packets of flower or veggie seeds and drop them in their letterboxes, with a Feel Good Feb Kindness Card." (There are free printable

cards and posters on (<http://www.feelgoodfeb.org/free-resources/free-resources-2/>) the FGF website).

We love Pang's suggestion on the FGF website that we can help create a happiness "ripple effect":

"No matter how big or how small your RAK is, you will be helping make someone's day that much better. You can literally change their life just by being kind. Then in turn, maybe they will do a kind deed for someone else. Kindness will flow organically, creating a ripple effect of happiness."

Give something away



Got clutter in your cupboards? Or an item you no longer need but would like to see loved by a new owner? Giving something away doesn't just help the recipient – research (<https://www.nature.com/articles/ncomms15964>) has shown that generous behaviour is often associated with increased happiness. Yep, do good, feel good. So making use of Nabo's Free to a Good Home option (you'll find the link in the Classified section, on the left-hand side of your Suburb Hub) is a win-win. You'll make a neighbour happy and feel good too.

Lend a hand



We love a story shared with us by a Nabo member who responded to a fellow member's request and made new friends. "A Mexican lady wanted to improve her English. Initially we talked on the phone and clicked and she invited me to have lunch with her and her husband who live two streets away. They have become great friends."

There are so many ways to lend a hand. Keep an eye out on Nabo – whether it's request for help or someone seeking recommendations, you could make a real difference. If you like the idea of volunteering, govolunteer.com.au (<https://govolunteer.com.au/>) is a good place to find opportunities. Or there could be a way to help right on your doorstep. Has a neighbour mentioned they are going away? Do they need a pet sitter, or their plants watered? You could make some money by being a pet sitter on Pawshake (https://www.pawshake.com.au/?utm_source=nabo&utm_medium=web&utm_campaign=blog). Or could you offer to grab some groceries for someone who's ill, or injured? A lot of people don't like asking for help, but if you keep an eye and an ear out you might spot something you can offer to do.

Say thanks



Saying thanks isn't just good manners, it can make people feel appreciated, build friendships and encourage a happy, helpful neighbourhood.

You could drop a note in a neighbour's letterbox; bake and give a cake (we can recommend this melt-and-mix chocolate cake recipe (<https://www.sbs.com.au/food/recipes/melt-and-mix-chocolate-coconut-cake>) by baking teacher Anneka Manning – easy and delicious!); invite a neighbour over for a thank-you cuppa; or create a post on Nabo to thank people who've given recommendations or other help. And of course, there's the 'thank' button on Nabo that appears below posts and messages too – it only takes a moment to show appreciation for a neighbour's contribution.

If you need a bigger thank-you, and you know what your friend or neighbour likes, a voucher from a local business is a great idea. If you aren't sure what they might like – or you need an instant thank you that can be sent by email right there and then! - a voucher from a business like Red Balloon (<https://www.redballoon.com.au/>) will give them heaps of options. Red Balloon offers thousands of presents and experiences, from things you might expect – adventure sports experiences, dance classes, river cruises, gourmet food gifts – to some truly one-of-a kind presents. How about a gift certificate that lets a shoe-lover design their own shoes (<https://www.redballoon.com.au/product/gift-boxes/personalised/design-your-own-heels>)??

Keep it going



While February 14 might be a nice prompt to share the love, it doesn't need to stop there. Even something as simple as a smile can make your neighbourhood a better place all year round.

Why not show Nabo some love and invite a friend (<https://www.nabo.com.au/invite>) to join the platform?