

June 2014 – This action packs a great healthy punch!

It's a simple 3-letter word that packs a massive health giving punch and I have my son to be grateful to for bringing it to my attention the other day as he downed all tools to give me a random, spontaneous one and then promptly told me off for selling us both short for not giving it the full attention that it deserved, so in a hurry was I and consumed with my own thoughts that had me jumping through hoops to 'do the honours' so to speak (just like this long-winded sentence!).

Boy was I glad that he brought me back to my senses and insisted that we 'take 2'. It felt *so good*. It was a real lesson learnt. Out of the mouths of babes. Mind you, he's now 17. He most definitely packed a punch :)

By now you've probably guessed that this simple 3-letter word is HUG. Add an E and the benefits are...let's just say...sizable.

To keep things short and simple, let's look at 3 reasons why:

1. Touch triggers the release of oxytocin (a natural occurring hormone in the body), creating that '*so good*' feeling, which boosts physical and emotional health. If you want to minimize your stress levels, reduce your heart rate and blood pressure, decrease fatigue, ease depression, reduce infection and bolster your immune system, give someone a hug! It's been well researched scientifically (mercola.com).
2. It's going to boost your self-esteem and give you a leg up in the self-love department if you're feeling a tad short changed here. What's more, it teaches you the finer points of giving and receiving. Boy was I a mean giver the other day, or was I a mean receiver? I'm not sure if the chicken came before or after the egg in this instance. All I know is that it worked.
3. The nurturing nature of hugging helps to build safety and trust. This in turn can provide a catalyst when it comes to having open and authentic conversations.

Having said that, I'm not advocating the giving 'free hugs' to any Tom, Dick or Harriet, as this will most likely NOT induce feelings of trust or safety. Oxytocin is likely to fast disappear and cortisol take its place. We're aiming for high-level wellness here, not symptoms and stress!

Start practising with people you love...there's a start. See how you can knock each other's socks off with a little hug and kindness (literally if you will ;).

My challenge to you on this beautiful June day is to give someone you love a 10/10 random, authentic hug, imbued with mindfulness.

Go on...make my day!

Caroline