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- Jennifer:** Hello and a very warm and friendly welcome to the first 6 Minute English of 2013. My name is Jennifer and with me in the studio for today's programme is Callum. Happy New Year!
- Callum:** Hi Jen – happy New Year!
- Jennifer:** Have you made any New Year's resolutions this year? A **resolution** is something that you decide you are going to do for that year – my resolution is that I'm going to get fit and go to the gym at least twice a week.
- Callum:** Well, I don't really believe in making resolutions, as I can never stick to them, but for the sake of the programme, I'll say that my resolution is to eat less junk food and to be a bit healthier in general.
- Jennifer:** That's not a bad idea. But what would you think about becoming kinder in 2013?
- Callum:** Don't you think I'm kind enough already?
- Jennifer:** I do think you're quite a kind person, but maybe you could try harder?
- Callum:** Now, hang on a second!
- Jennifer:** Before you get cross, listen to today's story – it's all about a study in America, which has shown that performing a kind act every day can have lots of benefits for you in your work life *and* your social life.
- Callum:** That sounds interesting...
- Jennifer:** ... but before we get to the story, I've got a question for you to answer. We've talked already about New Year's resolutions, so what is the most commonly broken resolution – what's the thing that people start out doing, but then don't continue? Is it:
- a) stopping smoking;
 - b) losing weight and getting fit;
 - c) travelling
- Callum:** Well, I'm going to go with b) losing weight and getting fit; I think that's something that's very difficult for people to actually do.
- Jennifer:** We'll find out if you're right at the end of the programme. Now, let's take a closer look at today's story. It's about a study done on schoolchildren in
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America. They were asked to carry out three **random** acts of kindness each week.

Callum: If something is **random**, it means it's unplanned. So, a random act of kindness means that you do something for someone that you haven't planned to do, just to be nice.

Jennifer: It's a lovely idea. But what could a random act of kindness be? Listen to this first part of a report from BBC correspondent Victoria Gill. See if you can identify some of the random acts of kindness she mentions.

BBC correspondent Victoria Gill:

This team of psychologists instructed classrooms of nine to eleven-year-old students to carry out three random acts of kindness per week. These could be anything from giving a stressed parent a hug to offering to share lunch with a friend.

Jennifer: What random acts of kindness did she mention?

Callum: The first example given was giving a **stressed** parent a **hug**. If you're stressed, you're worried and under pressure.

Jennifer: So that's a random act of kindness that makes you feel good and doesn't cost anything to do. What other examples were given?

Callum: Offering to share lunch with a friend. Would you be prepared to share your lunch with me?

Jennifer: No! You said you wanted to lose weight for your New Year's resolution, so keep your hands off my lunch! Seriously, though, children between the ages of nine and eleven took part in this kindness study, so what effects did being kind have on the children? Listen to the second part of Victoria Gill's report: what positive effects did the study have?

BBC correspondent Victoria Gill:

At the end of the four weeks, these kind acts had boosted the children's wellbeing, but they'd also shifted the dynamics of the whole classroom. The short period of enforced kindness made children significantly more popular with their peers; something the researchers measured by asking every child to nominate classmates that they would most like to spend time with.

Jennifer: We heard that the acts **boosted** the children's wellbeing – that means it made them feel better about themselves. It also changed the **dynamics** of the classroom. Can you explain the word 'dynamics', Callum?

Callum: The word 'dynamics' here refers to the feel – the atmosphere – of the classroom; the things that are important to the people in it and the way people act. So, being kinder has changed the general feeling in the classroom, and made it better.

Jennifer: Another positive effect was that children became more **popular** with their classmates – so people will like you more if you are kind to them! Let's hear the final part of the report and see if you can identify an adjective which describes a kind and selfless act.

BBC correspondent Victoria Gill:

The researchers say that encouraging schoolchildren to perform small and simple altruistic acts could make the classroom a happier place, and even help to discourage social problems such as bullying.

Jennifer: That word was '**altruistic**'. If you do something which is altruistic, you do it to help someone else and not gain anything yourself.

Callum: It's easy to see how performing kind acts can make classrooms or offices happier places. Maybe we should start doing kind acts in BBC Learning English for our New Year's Resolution?

Jennifer: Now that's not a bad idea! Speaking of New Year's Resolutions, we're nearly at the end of the programme, so we have to answer the quiz question! I asked what the most commonly broken resolution was. Was it:

- a) stopping smoking;
- b) losing weight and getting fit;
- c) travelling more

Callum: And I said b) losing weight and getting fit.

Jennifer: Well you were... wrong, it was a) stopping smoking. According to Time magazine, only 15% of people who stop smoking in January actually succeed. But we're not very good at getting fit, either – 60% of gym memberships taken out in January are never used and people don't stick to their diets, either.

Callum: Hmm – that's not very good, is it? Well if I'm not going to stick to my resolution to lose weight, then there is some good news...

Jennifer: What's that?

Callum: You can share your lunch with me after all!

Jennifer: Oh ok! Join us again for another edition of 6 Minute English from bbclearningenglish.com. Bye for now!

Callum: Bye!

Vocabulary and definitions

resolution	decision to change habits
random	unplanned and unpredictable
stressed	worried and under pressure
hug	cuddle
boosted	improved
dynamics	the way a group of people feel and act
popular	liked by many people
altruistic	something done for no personal gain

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