

* Pain Reliever. A good hug can help ease your aches and pains by helping the body release tension.(2)

* Immune System Booster. A hug gives the body an emotional uplift that motivates the third Chakra, known as the Solar Plexus Chakra. The stimulation of this Chakra rouses the thymus gland, which regulates the body's production of white blood cells, which keep you healthy.(2)

* Increases Happiness. Hugging boosts serotonin levels in our bodies, bringing about feelings of happiness and well-being and improving our mood.(2)

* Decreases Feelings of Loneliness. Hugging increases oxytocin in your blood stream. Oxytocin, otherwise considered as the "cuddle hormone" heals negative feelings of loneliness, anger and anxiety.(1)

* Teaches Us Giving and Receiving. Hugs teach us how to give and receive friendly exchanges with each other.(2)

* Encourages Mindfulness. Hugs help you to connect with your heart and your feelings and let go of routine everyday thoughts for a few minutes. Hugging can be like meditation for your body by teaching you to "be present in the moment."(2)

* Teaches us how to connect with each other. I have added this benefit because I am convinced of it. The more hugs you give, the more you learn to connect with people. Your senses of empathy, sympathy, care, compassion and understanding become more tuned in and you develop better personal connections with the people around you.

Why Hug?

Hugs are awesome! They're one of the best gifts you can give someone. They're free, they're quick and you can give someone a hug just about anywhere. You really can't mess up a hug. They're non-discriminatory; you can hug people of both sexes, of any race and of all ages. A hug speaks many languages: hello, good-bye, sympathy, compassion, gratitude, good luck, appreciation, thanks,

you're special and I love you. If you're not hugging, you're missing out.

Feeling a little blue? Get a hug. Notice that someone else is down? Give them a hug. Have no one to hug? You can still reap some of these benefits from hugging a pet or a stuffed animal.(3) Give a hug to the most deserving person you know – yourself! You'll not only gain some of the benefits but you'll get a nice stretch in your shoulders at the same time.



Sharon Mernin & grandson Noah Stucky

Go Hug!

Turn on those hug receptors of yours and watch for the chance to put your hugging skills to use. If you're looking for a day to celebrate the art of hugging, mark January 21 on your calendar. This day is reserved every year as National Hug Day. National Hug Day, though not a public holiday, is an annual unofficial event created by Rev. Kevin Zaborney. National Hug Day began in 1986 as a way to encourage people to hug the people they care about more often.(4)

An American psychotherapist, Virginia Satir, determined that "We need four hugs a day for survival. We need eight hugs a day for maintenance. We need twelve hugs a day for growth." Everyone can use a hug and you can never have too many. As soon as you finish reading this magazine, get out there and hug someone you care about. They'll be thankful for it and so will you!

■ By Julie Eickhoff

Sources:

1. <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/03/27/health-benefits-of-hugging-n-5008616.html>
2. <http://www.mindbodygreen.com/0-5756/10-Reasons-Why-We-Need-at-Least-8-Hugs-a-Day.html>
3. <http://www.etermitysunrise.org/reconnecting-with-your-body/benefits-and-power-of-hugs/>
4. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Hug_Day

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