

# The Power of Smells

Can the aroma of coffee and freshly baked cookies make you behave more kindly? Research conducted at a shopping mall in New York indicates that it just may.

Robert Baron, a professor at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, N.Y., decided to find out if pleasant scents could increase the “kindness quotient” in a typical mall crowd. Choosing a spot near Cinnabon and Mrs. Fields Cookies, he put his students to work gathering data.

In one test, mall patrons were asked to make change for a dollar. In another, the researchers noted how many shoppers retrieved a ballpoint pen that had been dropped. In both tests, people were twice as likely to perform an act of kindness in a pleasant-smelling area as they were in another part of the mall that had no pleasant aromas. Baron concluded: nice smells make for nicer people.

People would be wise, he suggests, to brew more coffee and to bake more cookies.

Perhaps better still, increase the kindness by taking that coffee and batch of cookies to someone in need!

--Beecher Hunter