

# FRAMES

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## The Healing Power of an Image

MOLLY FERRILL AND DAVID FRYBURG  
Envision Kindness



© Martin Buzora | *"The Caretaker"*, Kenya

"Elias Mugambi is employed as a ranger on Lewa Wildlife Conservancy at the foot of Mount Kenya. He recognizes the sentience of non-human beings and protects those who do not have a voice. If there is any hope left for wildlife on Earth, it is because of people like him." - Martin Buzora

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Mieke Dalle

© Mieke Dalle | “Pet Love”, Belgium

“In the picture you can see my son who is very happy with the chicks that came as a surprise during the Easter holidays. He hugged the animals with dedication, which together with the soft sunlight created a warm picture that fits the theme “envision kindness” very well...” - Mieke Dalle

**Photographers know that images can profoundly impact people.** Beyond simply capturing a moment, as artists we often strive to convey an idea or an emotion. Making impactful pieces requires moving the viewer to feel and to think.

Beyond any single image, what may be less well appreciated is how images are impacting people overall. That is, what is our society’s daily visual diet? What kinds of images are people “ingesting” during the day and how does this visual diet affect how they feel and behave? As people see hundreds of images daily, both consciously and subconsciously, these are important questions to ask if we are to consider how we, as photographers and editors, are

affecting people.

In the news, for example, people are regularly exposed to images and stories of greed, violence, and environmental or political crises. While the news is crucial in helping us to understand what’s going on and what needs to be improved, regular exposure to many negative stories and images without positive media to counterbalance them can have significant psychological consequences. Stories of crisis and the fear they instill are major stressors that can increase feelings of disconnection and polarization and can sometimes worsen biases. Altogether, elevated stress reduces mental and physical wellbeing and affects how we treat each other. So how can we relieve that stress?

# “Beyond any single image, what may be less well appreciated is how images are impacting people overall. That is, what is our society’s daily visual diet?”

## What kinds of images are people “ingesting” during the day and how does this visual diet affect how they feel and behave?”

### **The power of a kindness image to soothe stress:**

Many people seek out positive media to help themselves feel better, like images of kittens or puppies or humorous pieces.

At our non-profit, Envision Kindness, we have been focusing on using images of kindness and connection to help people rebalance their visual diet and strengthen their connection to their own humanity and that of others. We have crowdsourced many beautiful images of people and animals loving, helping, and caring for each other from photographers around the world. Our goal is to use these diverse perspectives to stir the innate drive to care for and connect with others.

We share these inspiring and moving images of kindness with people in high stress environments, focusing on healthcare. We craft the still images into short-form videos that are played in waiting areas, hallways, cafeterias, and other places in hospitals and healthcare offices. We have also displayed them in schools.

[Here](#) is a 2-minute sample of our media. The best way to understand its impact is to see how you feel.

We have studied the impact of these videos many times: viewing the videos decreases stress, irritation, and anxiety in minutes. Linked to this decrease in negative emotions, the videos foster happiness, calm, gratitude, and a feeling of connectedness to others. Behavior also changes: viewers feel more cared for, and in return they are more likely to be generous and kind to others, such as making a donation to support a needy family. Hospital staff who view the

videos also treat each other better. All of this has important consequences for people’s experience of healthcare.

### **Creating a community of kindness photographers**

We are always looking for new and inspiring images. To do so we created two photography programs. The first is the **Our World Is Kind photo contest**, an international kindness photography competition. It is an open competition that is free to enter and offers multiple prizes. Beyond any monetary prize, participating photographers know that their images can help inspire people and make the world a bit better. Later this year we will conduct our 7th contest. You can see the winners and finalists from our most recent contest [here](#).

Our other program is **Select Photographers**, an invitation-only group of talented photographers who have shown that they, like us, see the need for more kindness, peace, and caring in the world. We have just completed our first ever Select Photographers photo contest. We are thrilled to share the three winning images and stories from that contest with you below **along with commentary from the photographer and from us**. You can also read more about the Select Photographers program [here](#).

**We welcome more photographers to join us in the mission to spread kindness through sharing kindness images.** The more people participate, the more we can rebalance the visual diet of our society and help people feel better about their lives, less stressed, more connected to others, and more inclined to be kind to those around them.

Information on both programs can be found on our [website](#).

## Images from our recent Select Photographers Photo Contest



**Stella Tchuisse**

© Stella Tchuisse | *"In Prayer"*, Cameroon

**From the photographer (Stella Tchuisse):** While he is praying for a man, a pastor puts his hand on the chest of this believer. In our times of doubt and need, having a hand come for us, to us, can bring comfort and peace of mind. This image suggests that we have to be the hand that supports people who are in the dark.

**From the Envision Kindness team:** The peace that the comforting touch of the pastor transmits is palpable in this image. Just as a gentle touch can heal and reduce stress, the act of witnessing such a centering moment of support and physical comfort in an image can reduce stress and promote a sense of wellbeing.



© Guillaume Petermann | “Trust in Gentle Hands”, France

**From the photographer (Guillaume Petermann):** A doctor at the Mayotte Hospital Center (CHM) in Mamoudzou gently examines a young baby. The way they look at each other reflects the trust already forming between them. Despite a severely under-resourced healthcare system and exhausting working conditions, doctors, nurses, and caregivers in Mayotte continue to provide the best care they can—with kindness, compassion, and unwavering dedication.

**From the Envision Kindness team:** The gentleness of the hand and the smiling eyes of the doctor captured our attention in this image. The connection between the doctor and the baby is clear, and their positive interaction is made more meaningful by the presence of the baby’s mother in the foreground of the image, who must have been comforted herself by the kindness and attentive care of the doctor.



Emil III Mijares

© Emil III Mijares | “Returning the Love You Taught Me”, Philippines

**From the photographer (Emil III Mijares):** This moment shows my mom gently combing my Lola’s hair — the same hands once guided by hers. Now, roles have reversed, but the love remains. It’s a quiet, powerful return of care — proof that the kindness we give always finds its way back.

**From the Envision Kindness team:** There is such a tenderness to this image.

The gesture of care from the photographer’s mother feels gentle and loving, and the photographer’s Lola (grandmother) seems to look at herself with a sense of pride and contentment. The moment was also artfully captured, from the contrast between the warmth of the glowing light and the shadows to the choice of shooting over the mother’s shoulder to capture the women’s smiling faces in the mirror.

Molly Ferrill is a photographer and filmmaker, and the Director of Photography Collaborations at Envision Kindness. Her visual storytelling focuses on stories that inspire empathy and care for the planet and each other. She is passionate about working with kindness-focused photographers to help amplify the impact of their work in the environments where it is needed most.

David Fryburg, MD is a physician and a scientist and President of Envision Kindness. His love of photography since childhood helped drive the creation of Envision Kindness.

Envision Kindness is a non-profit organization with a mission to promote kindness, connection, and joy on a population scale, particularly in high stress environments. [www.envisionkindness.org](http://www.envisionkindness.org)



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