



Teaching Children to Practice Acts of Kindness

Being kind to other people and yourself is important for being a good friend and being happy. Modeling kindness, reflecting on kind actions, and practicing acts of kindness can help children develop this skill. This article includes strategies for helping children learn to be kind to other people and to themselves.

1. Be a Role Model – When adults say unkind things about other people or themselves, children learn this is acceptable behavior. Be a role model and say kind things about co-workers, neighbors, people in the community, and yourself.

2. Use Lists – Have children write lists or make collages representing what they like about their friends, family members, and people in the school. Hang the lists or art projects where classmates and friends can see them. Have a separate activity where children make a parallel list or art project that includes things they do well and why they are a good person.



From *Showing Respect*

3. Read and Write Stories – Read stories about kindness and respect in school and at home. Discuss how being kind makes the characters feel. Ask children to share times when they were kind and times when people were nice to them. Also have children write stories about being kind to other people.

4. Practice and Discuss Small Acts of Kindness – In addition to having children write and say things that are kind, have them practice little acts of kindness. Teach children to help other people in day to day situations such as when someone needs help carrying an item, they can't reach something, or they drop an item. Create a set of pictures or make short stories with opportunities for small acts of kindness. Have children role play what they would do to be helpful in these situations.

5. Learning to Do Kind Things for Yourself – Have children write or create a collage about things they like to do or activities that make them feel good about themselves. Discuss how taking time to participate in these activities can make them feel better and decrease stress.

6. Pick a Cause or Charity – A long term investment in a volunteer or charity activity teaches children that even a small amount of time and energy makes a big difference. First create a list of volunteer opportunities then let the class or family select an activity to join. Whether it is collecting food for a food bank, donating toys, or cleaning up a community area, these activities demonstrate how working collaboratively with other people can make a big difference. Discuss or have children keep a journal about the experience. Ask them to include how they felt and how they think the people benefitting from their time and effort felt.

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