



Do Acts of Kindness

Committing kind acts, such as volunteering to help parents, helping younger siblings get dressed, and treating other children as friends... these are examples of simple kindnesses that can become everyday habits.

Kindness reinforces our belonging to the group and results in an uplifting sensation that we desire to repeat. In a culture that strives to define itself as being a caring, unselfish society, the fact that kindness is contagious is an important truth. It is how the population sustains itself, in good times as well as bad.

Something happens inside of us when we commit an act of kindness that results in good

feelings and good health. As in the famous story of Dorothy, who was seeing the path back “home” in her search for the “Wonderful Wizard of Oz”, we find that the way. Nobody’s born with prejudice and unkindness already built in. It’s in the best interest of all human beings to practice habits of kindness.

Many children expect to be given everything, without doing anything on their part to help others. Encouraging children to be helpful and to do more than is on their daily chore lists, for example, will teach them to be aware of the needs of others and gives them practice in the fine art of having empathy.

Ways to practice this habit together:

- **Be kind to others.** When we engage in habits of kindness, our children follow our lead.
- **Reinforce kindness.** When children are kind to others, praise the act by describing what was done and telling them that you are proud of their behavior. Children need to be “caught being good”!
- **Establish family kindness goals.** Talk about and plan acts of kindness your family can do together, such as donate cans of food, pick up weeds in a neighbor’s yard, or visit a friend whose pet is lost to cheer her up, for example. Not only will your child learn kindness from your example, but he will also practice his natural empathy.
- **Ask for your child’s help by saying, “I need your help to take out the trash,” for example.** Telling your child that you need her help encourages empathy (putting herself in your shoes and feeling what you are feeling) and helps her know that you believe she is important and special.
- **Praise your child’s assistance by telling her how much you appreciate her effort and how much fun it is to have her working with you.**
- **Thank your child for her help.** Your thanks will be valuable to her and will teach her to express her gratitude when she has been helped – all of which help to build positive, healthy relationships between those who give and those who receive.

