

Kindness and Compassion

Performing simple acts of kindness and compassion encourages your child to think of others and makes her feel good about herself—a one-two punch that also helps to prevent bullying. Try these ideas to inspire your youngster to be a kind and compassionate person.



AT HOME

What do kindness and compassion look like? Use these activities to help your child spot kindhearted actions in her daily life.

Make a reminder

Look up *compassion* and *kindness* in the dictionary together. Then, have your youngster collect quotations about these qualities from books or websites. *Example:* “Always try to be a little kinder than necessary.” —J. M. Barrie. Ask your child to invent



her own sayings, too, such as “Be a ray of sunshine and brighten someone’s day.” Next, let her use her favorites to create a place mat. She can write the quotes graffiti-style on construction paper. Slip the paper into a plastic sheet protector so her place mat lasts longer. *Tip:* Suggest that your youngster spread the compassion message by making a place mat for each family member.

Catch kindness

Show your child how much kindness happens around him every day—he’ll see ways he can be kind, too. Have him make a label to stick on a clean, empty jar. It might say “Be kind” or “We’re a kind family.” Place the jar in an easy-to-reach location

continued

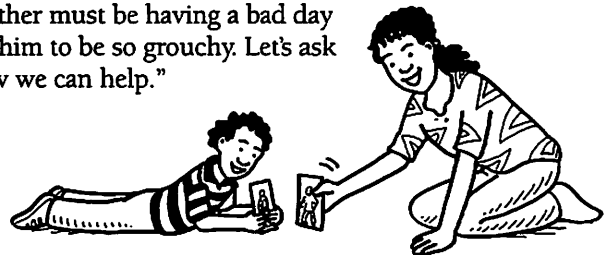
The anti-bullying connection

Empathy is a powerful tool against bullying. When children can imagine themselves in another person’s shoes, they’re less likely to be bullies and more prone to step in if someone else is bullied. These strategies will help your youngster consider how other people feel:

- Using pictures in magazines, take turns inventing scenarios that encourage you to put yourselves in another person’s place. *Example:* “Someone tripped this boy on the playground. How would you feel if that happened to you?”
- While watching videos or reading, point out when one character shows empathy for another. “George could see

how sad Lucy was when those kids were teasing her. I’m glad he stood up for her.”

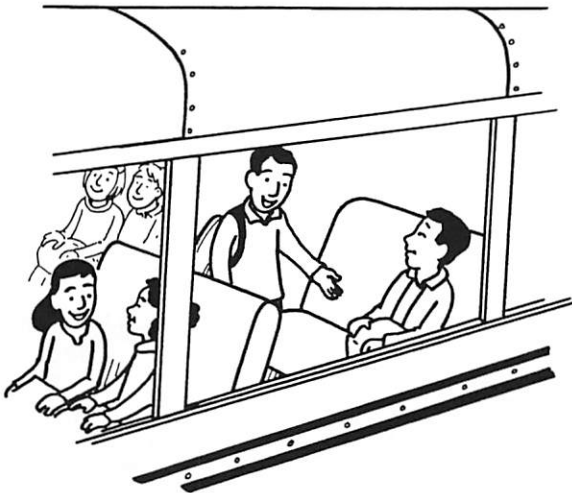
- Think aloud to help your child understand how to show empathy for people who act angry, rude, or mean. “Your brother must be having a bad day for him to be so grouchy. Let’s ask how we can help.”



along with slips of colored paper and a pen. Now tell everyone in the family to add a note to the jar when they “catch” someone being kind. For instance, “Dad made soup for me because I didn’t feel well” or “Jeremy cleaned up the dog’s muddy paw prints so Mom didn’t have to do it.” Once a week, read the slips aloud. Then, start a new batch.

AT SCHOOL

When students are kind and compassionate, there is more learning and less bullying. These ideas can help your youngster be a caring classmate.



Welcome someone new

Have your child think about what it feels like to be the new kid. You might remind him how he felt on his first day somewhere. Maybe he was afraid the kids at basketball camp wouldn’t like him or that he’d have no one to play with at an after-school program. Then, help him think of ways to make things better for a new student. For example, he could sit with the classmate on the bus or invite him to join a kickball game at recess.

Share a compliment

While your youngster doesn’t have to be best friends with everyone in her class, she does need to be nice to them. Encourage her to focus on each person’s strengths instead of reasons she might not like them. Try prompting her with questions like “Who is a good athlete?” or “Who draws cool pictures?” Suggest that she use those answers to give compliments. For instance, in art class, she can tell a classmate she likes his painting. After a spelling bee, she could congratulate the winner. She may be surprised to see that a few nice words will encourage others to be kind, too.

AROUND TOWN

When your youngster regularly puts others first, kindness and compassion become second nature. Take advantage of big and small opportunities for her to make a difference in the community.

Pay it forward

Make it a family policy to do two kind things for each one done for you. Be sure to let your child know that even small things count. Someone might hold the door open for her to enter a restaurant, for example. To pay the kindness forward (twice), your youngster could hold the door for another person—and offer to get an elderly couple’s order when it’s called.



For times when she can’t pay it forward right away, your child can watch for chances to catch up during the day.

Encourage a can-do attitude

In tough situations, your youngster may want to show compassion but feel that his actions won’t make a difference. For instance, he might want to help a neighborhood family who lost everything in a house fire. Remind him that while some things are too big for him to fix completely, there’s still plenty he can do. Then, brainstorm ideas together. His list could include everything from donating clothes from his own closet to bigger things like having a yard sale to raise money for the family.

