

Introducing Kids to Doing Acts of Kindness

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One question we often receive from parents and grandparents is “How do I introduce my children to doing acts of kindness?” No matter what age they are, we believe you can always encourage your kids to start doing kind acts!

Easing Them In, No Pressure

The first thing to keep in mind is that children are more likely to want to get involved in something if they do not feel pressured into doing it. You can start off by talking to them about kindness and doing kind acts first. Whether you share ways you yourself have been kind or ask them what kind things have happened to them during their day, talking about it is a great way to get them thinking about kindness. Over time, as they get used to being asked what kind things happened to them or any kind things they might have done, you help them become more familiar with the concept of kindness. And before you know it, kindness becomes a habit. In addition to talking about kind things that have happened, pointing out when you see someone, including them, do something kind helps to reaffirm the concept in their minds.

Looking for some inspiration to share with your kids about how their peers are practicing kindness? Read the real-life [Kindness Stories About Kids](#) that members of KindSpring.org have shared! You just might find one story that gets the kids excited about embarking on their first kindness adventure!

Lead By Example

A very effective way to help teach kids to practice kindness is to lead by example. When children see you do a kind act and you talk to them about it, they learn wonderful things from you. Even when you don't think they are paying attention, they are. No matter what age they are kindness is contagious. If you are planning on doing an act of kindness maybe they can participate or even help! Including them is a great way to teach them how to practice kindness. It doesn't have to be something big. The small acts are not only easier at times but still very effective. If they are shy or nervous about doing something, being there with you while you perform a kind act might put them at ease. Even if they aren't the ones performing the act they can learn kindness from watching you!

Start Small

When children seem ready to proactively begin to do acts of kindness, start off by suggesting that they do something small. Simply smiling at the people they pass when you're out together one day at a shopping mall, library or grocery store is a great way to get started. You may wish to start by encouraging them to do something simple like being nice to another kid at school, opening doors for people or giving compliments. You may be surprised at some of the things that the children are excited to do and they will likely be surprised by the reactions that they get in return!

If you are around when they do their kind act, encourage them in any way you can. Even if it doesn't go as they expected, you can help them to learn from the experience and understand that the reaction they receive is not what's important, but rather the intention in their own hearts is what matters, so they should simply focus on doing something kind with a lot of love. Each day that you ask them what kind things they may have done during the day, you are gently reminding them that kindness matters. When you talk to them about it that is your chance to make them feel good about whatever they did. It isn't necessarily about what they did, but that they do something and that they keep kindness fresh in their minds.

Inspiring Kids to Keep Up the Kind Acts

So how do you keep them going? Encouragement and positive support are great ways to reinforce to them that kindness is important. Make the kind acts fun and even have them help decide what to do. By talking to them about kindness on a regular basis, you will keep it on their mind, which is always good. Sometimes it helps if you intentionally set out to do something kind, alone or together, both work. Don't give up! Before you know it, they will be out there doing kind acts and excited to share their stories with you. Then you can even share their story on KindSpring.org if you wish, to inspire other families! Kindness is contagious so have fun spreading some smiles to those around you!

Simple Kindness Ideas to Help You Get Started

How can you get started? The first time you consciously do an act of kindness it can be a little daunting or intimidating. Any small act can make a difference and here are a few suggestions to help you get started!

For the littlest ones:

- Pick up trash in the park or around your neighborhood together.
- Hold the door open for someone at a store or other public place together with your child
- Get a bunch of balloons and give them out to kids. You can do it in front of a store, at a park or a playground or anywhere that kids might be found!
- Hand out flowers to strangers in any public place.

For 5-10 year-olds:

- Have a child deliver a hand-made card to a neighbor.
- Ask a child to give away one of his/her toys.
- Bake something sweet with a youngster and have them pass it on to the mailman, cleaner, or another public service helper with a thank-you note.
- Set up a "lemonade" stand on a street corner in your neighborhood and give it away freely to passersby. Here is a real-life story of a lemonade stand in New York City just might inspire your kids: [All It Takes Is Lemonade](#)

For 11 years or older:

Our Just for Teens section has lots of kindness ideas for teenagers, and in addition, here are a few to get you started:

- As a family, write thank you cards for someone you know who you appreciate. It could be a relative, a friend, a colleague or a teacher.

- Encourage a child to start a conversation with a new kid in the community or eat lunch at school with someone he/she doesn't normally talk to.
- Engage kids in volunteerism by helping out at a local community group whose cause they feel connected to (eg. animal shelter, a children's center, etc)
- Help the kids put on a free car wash in your neighborhood, like these kids did: [10th Birthday](#)