

Parenting Together

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Share the Love by Teaching Kindness

February 17th is National Random Acts of Kindness Day. This month, spend time focusing on the little things your family can do together to make the world a better place for your family, community, and the environment. Big or small, it is important to make every day count!



"No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted." - Aesop

What are some ways that that parents can help children practice kindness, empathy, and compassion for others)? Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- Acknowledge your child's emotions. Let your child know that everyone has different feelings and all feelings are okay.
- Show your child that feelings are all around her. Share your feelings and point out the feelings of storybook characters.
- Model kind words and actions and point them out to your child.

Empathy, kindness and compassion are fairly complex skills and your young child may not be able to identify these big feelings quite yet. This doesn't mean that you can't start by modeling some of these skills! Children begin to understand that other people have feelings too once they develop Theory of Mind (or the ability to understand that his feelings are different from yours).

Make Amends

Many parents spend time teaching their child to say "I'm sorry," which is incredibly important for how children relate to their family, friends, and peers. Take this action one step further by having your child think about and ask:

- Are you okay?
- What can I do to help make you feel better?

You can model this in conversations with your children, family, and co-workers. By taking the apology that extra mile, you take a proactive approach in helping to make amends. Remember, you are helping your child make amends, not just apologize.



Oregon State
University

The Book Nook

When I am/Cuando Estoy
by Gladys Rosa Mendoza

Hug Machine
by Scott Campbell

The Kissing Hand/Un beso en mi mano
by Audrey Penn

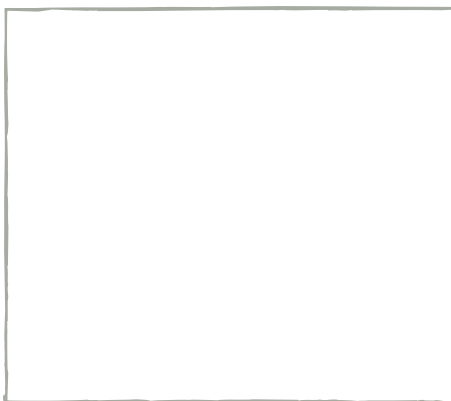
Explore feelings through books

Not only is reading a great opportunity to spend quality learning time with your child, it is also a chance to practice important skills!

Often, when we read with our children there is a focus on getting from the beginning to end with little interruption in between. Before you sit down to read, make it an intentional plan to read a bit and then stop for discussion. Ask your child to identify how each of the characters might be feeling during various parts of the story.



*How do you think he felt when that happened?
Have you ever felt this way?*



Random Acts of Kindness

Another important step in teaching kindness is modeling these skills for your child. Spend some time with your child picking a few of these activities to try out this month!



- Donate used clothing to a charity
- Write a Thank You Card together to show your appreciation for someone special
- Walk around your neighborhood and see if there are ways to 'beautify' by picking up trash or planting a flower
- Call or Video chat with a family member that lives far away to show that you care

- Visit the United Nations World Food Programme website to answer fun trivia questions together. For each question you get right, they donate rice to fight hunger (freerice.com)
- Write a card to a child in the hospital via the organization "Cards for Hospitalized Kids" (cardsforhospitalizedkids.com)

February is a month that is often characterized by the flowers, candies, and lovely notes that we share with each other on Valentine's Day.

Make this month extra special by focusing on kindness, empathy, and compassion with your child.

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References

- Zero To Three:
<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/5-how-to-help-your-child-develop-empathy>
- What I Learned from Teaching my Daughter About Empathy:
<https://orparenting.org/2016/08/08/empathy/>