

## Teaching Kindness

Are you teaching your children to be kind? Kindness is a powerful and transformative tool. The Dalai Lama says, “Kindness IS his religion.” Kindness is not just about charitable acts and concern for others but encompasses a way of thinking and being which generates an over-arching pleasant disposition.

Kindness is about how we pay attention to one another. It can be as simple as mustering up our wandering mind in order to fully listen when someone is speaking to us. We can learn to pay attention to the other people in our lives by being interested in their stories and their circumstances. Looking for the good in others, especially when there has been an argument or a falling out is not only an act of kindness, but it fends off indifference and intolerance. In paying attention to what is happening around us we get a chance to see other ways of looking at things and this broader perspective helps us to see things in context.

Sometimes children struggle with being kind to others who are unkind to them. It can take a lot of courage and strength to see good in someone who is being hurtful, even though harbouring resentment and hurt in itself leads to unhappiness. Being kind isn’t about being wimpy or weak, but it can create a softer heart which is more open to others.

Research has shown that acts of kindness not only benefits the receiver but generate feelings of contentment and relaxation in the giver. It really does make us feel good. In teaching our children to demonstrate acts of kindness towards others with no wish or expectation that it be reciprocated, we are building their sense of self-worth and well-being, and creating caring, tolerant, understanding and very likeable human beings. AND we are teaching them to be happy.

It is not so hard to treat our children with kindness, but when we demonstrate kindness and speak kind thoughts to and about friends, acquaintances and others, our children are likely to be kind as well. Speaking sharply about others, maybe a thoughtless driver or an unpopular politician, can create an “us and them” way of thinking that devalues others as “less” than ourselves. Remember that your children learn more from what you do than from what you tell them.

Help your children to actively look for kind deeds, beauty and opportunities to be kind. When we focus on kindness, our world becomes kinder and we become kinder. Teach your children to be kind, not because others are, but because THEY are. And who doesn’t want a kind friend?

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