

CULTIVATING KINDNESS

Dear Families and Caregivers,

It's never too early to start talking with your child about kindness. We start when they're toddlers, by talking with them about taking turns and playing with others. As your little ones grow, they develop the ability to empathize with others. By the time children enter elementary school, they'll likely have a decent understanding of what it means to show kindness and why it's important, even if they need reminders now and again. Using the ideas below you can encourage your child to empathize with others and spread kindness.

Sparking Conversations

When you see someone being kind, point it out to your child. You can see examples of kindness in TV shows, movies, and books, too. Pointing it out to your child will help them recognize kindness all around, and might inspire them to act with kindness. You can also point out unkindness, and discuss what might have been done differently. Use these opportunities to talk about when your child might have been unkind to someone. Talk about factors that can cause unkindness (such as having a bad day) and point out that both kindness and unkindness can have a domino effect. Remind kids that everyone deserves kindness, even when it might feel difficult to summon. On the way home from school, during dinner, or at bedtime, ask your child to recall an example of kindness they witnessed or were a part of that day. Ask how it made your child feel.

Get Active

Brainstorm ways to cultivate kindness in your community (i.e., picking up litter at a park, offering to return someone's shopping cart at the grocery store, or giving someone a compliment). Create a kindness journal with your child. This can be an extra notebook, or blank papers stapled together. Allow students to decorate their journal. On the first page you can work together to make a list of kindness activities. Challenge your child to complete at least one act of kindness. Have them journal about what they did, and how it made them feel. They can journal about acts of kindness they witness, too. Check in with your child at the end of the week to see how they showed kindness, and ask how it made them feel. They might soon notice that they're spreading kindness all the time.

Groups That Help Kids Make a Difference

Little Brothers—Friends of the Elderly, lbfenetwork.org

- Little Brothers—Friends of the Elderly helps relieve social isolation and loneliness among people over the age of 60 through intergenerational friendship. LBFE is a nonprofit and has offices in Massachusetts, Illinois, Ohio, Michigan, Florida, Minnesota, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, and California.

Operation Gratitude, operationgratitude.com/volunteer

- Operation Gratitude provides people of all ages with the opportunity to show their gratitude to the United States Military and first responders by creating and sending care packages. There are many ways kids can support Operation Gratitude, including writing letters to our heroes, making paracord lanyards, and hosting a collection drive.

Random Acts of Kindness Foundation randomactsofkindness.org

- This nonprofit provides free resources to empower people to spread kindness at school, at home, and beyond.