

+Kindness: Parent Edition

The February Character Trait of the Month

Kindness and generosity are two of the most important qualities a child can develop as they grow. As the adult in their life, you can influence children to act on their empathy and show kindness to anyone they meet. So, try these six tips for teaching kids to be kind.

Discuss What Kindness Means and Looks Like

Even before your children start to actively demonstrate kindness, they can experience empathy. By reflecting on those feelings, you can guide them to the concepts of empathy, generosity, and kindness in a way that will make sense to them.

Grab a book like [Rubylicious](#), where two of your kids' favorite characters — Pinkalicious and Peterrific — must decide what to do when they're granted one wish and end up learning how being selfless and kind is the best reward of all. After reading the story, you can talk to your child about what they learned from the story, such as how hard the decision was for Pinkalicious and Peter and what they gained by making the choice they did. Stories like *Rubylicious* are great conversation starters and fun demonstrations that are easy for kids of all ages to understand. These conversations are a great way to introduce the idea of kindness to young kids in their first years at school. And it can open up the conversation for everyone in your family or classroom to give their own definition of kindness and talk about the gestures they appreciate.

Use Play Pretend, Games, and Stories

While talking can be a productive way to teach kindness to kids, sparking their imagination with a silly game or an engaging story can be even better. Try having a smiling competition to show them just how contagious a bright smile really is, which can teach them this simple expression of kindness. Or, you can [play the compliment game](#), where kids gather around in a circle and pass a ball back and forth. The child with the ball must compliment the person they're about to throw to before they toss the ball.

Play with them and introduce situations that make them consider how others feel. You might have a doll bump their head and ask the child what they should do to comfort it. You can also pose some hypothetical questions, like how they'd feel about being in a tough situation or how they would want to be treated.

Be an Example of Kindness

Kids are incredibly observant, and they learn a lot about how to treat others by watching the adults in their life. Demonstrate kindness when you are out and about so that you can live by example and have stories to tell the children in your life. You should also show kindness toward others when your kids are around so they can watch and mimic you.

Promote Kindness Through Selfless Habits and Experiences

You can encourage kids to become pros at showing kindness by helping instill good habits, like using manners, expressing gratitude or compassion, and doing random acts of kindness. Activities like volunteering or participating in community action will make for a great family bonding experience, as well as a chance to learn.

Help Them Understand That Kindness Isn't Always Easy

As adults, we know that sometimes being nice to someone can be hard, especially if that person hasn't been nice to us. However, one of the best lessons you can teach a child is to do the right thing and show kindness, even when you don't necessarily feel like it. Again, make sure to model that behavior, too, so they can learn by example.

Focus on How It Feels To Be Kind

Parents can offer stories from their own lives to demonstrate kindness, generosity, and empathy in the real world. Consider telling your kids of times when you experienced kindness from others or when you were kind to someone else. Focus on how good it made you feel to be the recipient of kindness or how you felt fulfilled from being nice to someone else.

Or, make it a habit to have children reflect after being kind to someone and consider the positive feelings they get when they're kind and generous. This can help them learn to be kind without needing to be rewarded and to feel good about doing it, just like in *Rubylicious!*

These are just some of the ways to instill kindness and generosity in children so they can have strong and long-lasting relationships with the people in their lives.