

A close-up photograph of a pair of hands, one from an adult and one from a child, gently holding a bright red, textured heart. The hands are positioned in the upper right quadrant of the page, with the adult's hand supporting the child's hand from below. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white and grey pattern.

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KNOW! TO CULTIVATE KINDNESS

Small acts of kindness can ease stress, combat loneliness, boost self-esteem, strengthen relationships, and create more connected communities. Kindness is a skill that you have the power to teach and strengthen, so take some time this month to encourage the young people in your life to practice kindness. Read further to explore four ways to cultivate kindness today!

MODEL KINDNESS AND RESPECT ^{1,2}

Young people of all ages look to adults as role models. They pay attention to how we treat others and learn from our actions. By modeling kindness in what we say and do, we can inspire them to do the same. Here are some ways to set a positive example:

- Show genuine interest in young people's lives. Engage them in conversations, ask questions, and listen closely to their answers. Encourage them to ask you questions too.
- Treat everyone—your friends, family, neighbors, and even strangers—with respect. Speak kindly to and about others and prioritize caring for them in your day-to-day interactions.
- Demonstrate that kindness includes being kind to yourself. Practice self-care by getting enough rest and making time for yourself when you can. Let young people see you show self-compassion and grace when you make mistakes.

PRACTICE INCLUDING OTHERS ²

For older children and teens, discussing inclusion can help them reflect on their own behavior and how it affects others. Try using open-ended questions to spark a meaningful conversation, such as:

- I saw something on the news today about bullying. What do you think can be done to help prevent it?
- How would you handle a situation if your friends were being unkind or excluding someone?
- What do you think are some challenges teens face today when it comes to being kind to one another? How can we overcome those challenges?

PRACTICE INCLUDING OTHERS ²

For young children who are still learning social skills, practicing ways to include others and be friendly in a safe setting can help build their confidence in reaching out socially. Here are some ideas:

- Help young children think of what to say and do when they want to be kind to someone. Role-play how to reach out, like smiling at someone, giving a compliment, or inviting a friend to play. You can also practice specific phrases like "Would you like to sit next to me on the bus today?" if your child wants to reach out to a particular person.
- Children naturally notice differences between themselves and their peers. When they ask questions about why someone may look, talk, or act differently than they do, use it as an opportunity to encourage inclusion. You might say, "There are many wonderful ways to be a person. Let's talk together about it and practice ways we can include our friends who are different from us."

ENCOURAGE EMPATHY³

Kindness begins with understanding and respecting others' feelings and viewpoints. Teaching young people to recognize and value their own emotions is crucial; it helps them to become more attuned to the emotions of others. Here are some ways to foster empathy:

- Encourage young people to openly express a full range of emotions and acknowledge their feelings without judgment. Instead of dismissing or downplaying their emotions, show genuine curiosity by asking questions to better understand their experiences. Demonstrate the importance of asking thoughtful questions and actively listening to understand others' experiences.
- Empathy begins with connection. During your conversations with young people, ask questions that help them feel connected to others, such as, "Who is someone you feel a connection with, and what makes that connection strong?" or "Can you remember a time when someone tried to connect with you? How did they make you feel?" These questions can help them reflect on how we relate to and support one another.
- Identifying emotions in ourselves and others can be challenging. Use scenes from TV shows or movies as teaching moments to help young people observe and interpret emotions in others. Try asking questions like, "What do you think the characters are feeling in this situation? Why? What clues help you understand their emotions?"

SPREAD KINDNESS TOGETHER⁴

Acts of kindness can have a positive impact on both you and those around you. Helping others doesn't need to be costly, time-consuming, or stressful. Encourage young people to brainstorm ways they can turn activities they already enjoy into acts of kindness, then make a plan together to spread kindness. Here are some ideas to get started:

- Help a neighbor by raking their leaves or delivering homemade baked goods
- Donate gently used books to a school or library in your community
- Send a card or letter to reconnect with someone you've been out of touch with
- Draw a picture to give to a friend or loved one
- Ask a friend how they're doing and listen with an open mind
- Volunteer at a local charity that is important to you
- Send a care package to someone going through a tough time
- Leave a positive comment on a friend's social media post
- Offer to share a skill with a friend and teach them how to do something you enjoy

RESOURCES

[The Choose Kindness Project Parent Playbook](#)

[Random Acts of Kindness Foundation](#)

[Brene Brown on Empathy](#)

[9 Tips for Teaching Kindness in the Classroom](#)



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