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# Kindness:

Online, Face to Face, and Everywhere



## BACKGROUND

Kindness is an attribute that we can each develop further! Children need parents to help them understand that kindness is not just a quality to have with their friends or family, but at all times. This includes being **authentic** in all contexts, including social media, email, texts and other interactions. (Bolded terms have been defined in the Glossary.)

## PREPARATION

- Evaluate your behaviors with family and friends both on and offline and take inventory. Does your behavior correlate with what you are trying to teach your children?
- Evaluate your online behaviors to determine if you are being authentic at all times in your interactions.
- Research sites that shame others and those that uplift others and determine how you feel after viewing each. Be ready to share your experiences and use them as examples in your lesson.

## OBJECTIVE

- Define **kindness** (see glossary) for your child and give some of your favorite examples.
- Help children understand the need for kindness.
- Discuss how kindness is more than just a feeling: it includes our thoughts, actions, and words.
- Discuss how we need to be kind to others in person and online.
- Discuss how **bullying** is never acceptable.
- Discuss how **empathy** can help us to choose to be kind to others.

## LESSON

Kindness is an action that is motivated from feelings of empathy and compassion. Today's culture teaches children that being overly critical of others is a positive thing. Websites dedicated to "shaming" others (i.e. People of Walmart, Lamebook, Awkward Family Photos, Youidiot.org, etc.) number in the hundreds, if not thousands, and some celebrities, like Joan Rivers and Kathy Griffin, have even become famous simply because of their public criticisms.

## DISCUSSION

Kindness is not simply being overly positive or "liking" friends' posts just to show your support. It could mean getting out of your comfort zone by standing up to your friends or others who are bullying a peer on social media, stopping when it isn't convenient to help someone on the side of the road, or helping a sibling with a homework assignment when you'd rather be playing.

- Discuss the importance of being kind to others online, in texts, on social media, and in person (face to face).
- Explain how bullying on or offline can hurt others.
- Discuss the need to be kind to ourselves.
- Teach ways that children can choose to be kind even when it is easier to be unkind.
- Share examples of others being kind to you.
- Emphasize that kindness online is more important than ever before since this is where so many of our interactions are happening in our culture.

## ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION FOR OLDER KIDS

- Explain how kindness may not be the popular opinion, may result in a friend's disapproval, or may cause the dissolution of a friendship.
- Discuss times you have chosen to be kind when it was not convenient and, if any, the results.
- Discuss the need to be authentic online and how kindness should be part of who we are on and offline.
- Ask your child to share a time when someone was kind to them.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR CHILD

1. What does it mean to be kind?
2. Why should you be kind to others even when they are not kind to you?
3. How have you benefited from others' kindness?
4. How is bullying online just as hurtful as bullying in "real life"?
5. How do you feel when someone says or writes something mean on social media about you?
6. Why do you think it is important to be kind to ourselves?
7. How does it make you feel when you are kind to yourself? Why?
8. When was a time that you have chosen to be kind to someone who was being unkind to you?
9. How do you feel when someone is kind to you when you have been unkind to them?

## ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS OR OLDER CHILDREN

1. How is it kind to encourage a friend not to smoke/use drugs/view pornography/etc.?
2. How can you show kindness through texts? On **social media**? In email? On gaming sites? In other places online?

## ACTIVITES

1. As a family choose to practice being more kind to one another for a week:  
Fill a jar with popsicle sticks with kind things children can do for each other, parents, and neighbors. Encourage children to pick at least one popsicle stick daily. At the end of the week discuss how being kind made each of you feel.  
For older children:  
Each time you see someone being kind, write on a slip of paper what was done with the person's name on it. At the end of the week, read each slip and discuss how being kind made you each of you feel.
2. Share this scenario with your child:  
A new boy, Jordan, has just moved to your school. Jordan has a foreign accent and dresses differently than any of your friends. Your best friend, Bailey, found out that he has a social media account and decides to make fun of him online. Your other friends hear Bailey's idea and join in. They also start bullying Jordan at lunch. They push him and call him names. When you get home and log on to you social media account you see that on Jordan's page your friends have written ethnic slurs and told Jordan to "Go home!"

### Questions:

1. What would you say to your friends?
2. Why is simply ignoring your friends' behavior still not being kind?
3. How could you show Jordan kindness?
4. How can you help your friends choose to be kind?

## FOLLOWING UP FOR PARENTS

- If your child is being bullied, discussions about bullying may bring up feelings or emotions in your child that you are unaware of. If this occurs, check out "[Giving a Voice to Bullying Victims](#)" for tips to help your child.
- Your example of kindness is essential for your kids to see. The kinder you are to your children, the more likely they are to be kind to others and to remember this lesson.

## RELATED DISCUSSIONS

All of the following lessons can be found in [30 Days to a Stronger Child](#) on [Amazon](#):

Friendship  
Respect  
Community  
Empathy

## RELATED ARTICLES AND LESSONS

[Giving a Voice to Bullying Victims](#)

[10 Ways Kids Can Use Technology For Good](#)

[How to Raise a Bully](#)

[5 Ways to Teach Children Empathy](#)

[A Lesson About Using Technology for Good](#)

### GLOSSARY:

**Kindness:** Having, showing, or the desire to do good to others.

**Empathy:** Choosing to experience another's feelings, thoughts or attitudes as your own.

**Authentic:** Not false. Representing yourself the same online as offline.

**Bullying:** Continuously badgering or intimidating others who are weaker or different in person or via technology.

**Social Media:** Websites and apps that people use to share information and develop personal and professional relationships. Facebook, Google+, Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat, and Twitter are examples of social media.