

Kindness Age 1 Summary

Why Kindness?

Children learn about themselves and how they relate to others through sensitive, caring interactions with you. These interactions impact their ability to learn about and manage their feelings and to trust in you as a caregiver. Focusing on kindness with your child will lay a critical foundation for trusting interactions.

Trap: Be sure you talk about anger at a calm time when you are not stressed or upset!

Tip: Intentional communication and building a healthy parenting relationship will support these steps.

STEP

1



GET INPUT

Getting to Know and Understand Your Child's Input

- Each time your child expresses any big feeling, be sure to name it: *"You seem angry"* or *"You seem happy."*
- Simple questions and interactions can engage your child. Your child may respond with a few simple words, and they can respond with eye contact, facial expression, and body movements.
- When reading books, look at the images of children or animals and guess the feelings. You could say, *"I think the little bear is happy to see his friends. He has a smile on his face."*
- If your child is feeling unsure about how others are feeling -- or buried in their own feelings -- help them by sharing what you think others are feeling. You could say: *"I wonder if she feels happy because her friend shared the toys. Do you think she feels happy?"* Or, *"I think that person might be feeling angry because their face is red and their eyebrows are scrunched up. Do you think they feel angry?"*
- Practicing naming feelings will enable your child to identify their feelings and seek support when needed.

**STEP
2****Teach New Skills**

- Model kindness while interacting with your child. Modeling kindness can be one of the greatest teaching tools.
 - Share the focus. As you spend time with your child, follow their lead.
 - Notice gestures and listen for thoughts and feelings. When they express a feeling on their face or through their body, name it. *“I noticed your face is red, and your mouth is frowning. You look angry.”*
 - Children require your attention to thrive. So, why not build a special time into your routine when you are fully present to listen to what your child has to tell you? Turn off your phone. Set a timer if needed. Then, notice your body language. Ask yourself, “What is my body communicating, and how am I demonstrating that I am listening?”
- Talk to your child.
 - Talk clearly and slowly. Exaggerate your words for clarity and understanding. Don’t use “baby talk,” which can be challenging to understand.
 - Label what you see. *“I see your sister is sharing her toys with you. That is kind of her.”*
- Narrate your feelings. For example, you might say, *“I baked some cookies for our friends down the street. I am excited to share them. Do you think we should walk over and give them the cookies?”*
- Narrate your daily routines. For example, *“We are volunteering in our community today. I like helping others and would love to take you with me. Does that sound good to you?”*

**STEP
3****Practice to Grow Skills and Develop Habits**

- Model warm greetings, introduce your child, and facilitate greetings with new individuals. Share one thing you know or love about that person with your child to make a caring connection.
- When out in your community while running errands with your child, make introductions and involve your child in conversations with neighbors, the bank teller, or the grocery cashier.
- Recognize effort by using “I notice...” statements like, *“I noticed how you let your brother play with your toys. That is kind of you.”*
- Read together. Reflect on the story, and you’ll take the learning opportunity one step further. *“I think it was kind of the bear to share his umbrella.”* Involve your child in selecting the book, holding it, and turning the pages to build ownership and interest in reading.

- Many children are born with a cautious or shy temperament. They might not readily warm up to strangers and may show a fear of strangers. Respect that temperament by not forcing interaction and instead modeling your own kind interactions with others.

Trap: Do not force physical interactions like hugs, high-fives, or handshakes between your child and other new individuals. Teach your child early that they can control their own physical space and are never obligated to make physical contact with another.

STEP
4



Support Your Child's Development and Success

- Learn about your child's development. Each new age presents different challenges. Being informed about your child's developmental milestones offers you empathy and patience.
- Don't move on quickly if your child shows interest in a new person. Children often need more time to adjust to new individuals. Be sure to wait enough for your child to warm up to the new person. Your waiting could make all the difference in whether your child is able to gain relationship skills over time.
- Recognize effort by using "I notice..." statements like: *"I noticed how you gave me one of your toys to play with. I love seeing that."*
- On days with extra challenges, when you can see your child is scared of new people or situations, offer confidence in your child's ability to face the new. In a gentle, comforting way, you can say, *"Today, we will meet some new people. I will be with you all the time. I like meeting new people."*
- Actively reflect on how your child is feeling when approaching challenges. You can offer reflections like:
 - *"You seem worried about going into this new store. I'll hold you so you feel more confident."* Offering comfort when facing new situations can help your child gain a sense of security and face them rather than backing away.
 - You can also offer comfort items to help your child face new challenges. *"Would your bear help you feel better?"*

STEP
5



Recognize Efforts

- Smile at your child.
- Make eye contact.
- Use caring facial expressions.
- Be physically gentle and caring with your child.

- Use words to celebrate and encourage. When your child listens and follows your instructions, call it out: *“I notice you shared your blanket with your brother. I love seeing your kindness toward him.”*
- Build celebrations into your everyday routines. Promote joy and happiness by laughing, singing, dancing, hugging, and snuggling to appreciate one another.

Tip: The first year is filled with amazing changes—not just for your child. Remember to recognize and celebrate your development and milestones as a parent.

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