Tools for Your Child's Success.org

Kindness Age 2 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. Your focus 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 healthy parenting relationships will support these steps.

STEP 1 GET INPUT — Get Your Child Thinking by Getting Their Input

- Simple questions can be conversation starters to engage your child in learning about kindness.
    - *"What do you notice? I notice..."*
    - *"How do you feel? I feel…"*
    - *"I wonder if the other person feels sad because their head is down. How do you think they might feel?"*
    - *"What are you wondering? I am wondering what happens next."*
- When reading books, look at the images of children or animals and guess the feelings by asking questions like, *"What do you think the frog is thinking? What do you think the fish is feeling?"*
- Practicing naming feelings will enable your child to identify their feelings and others and seek support when needed.

STEP 2 · TEACH — 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 thought and feeling: *"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?"

- Read and "pretend play" together.
  - During reading time, select a book of faces to help your child learn to identify the different feelings of other children.

  - After reading a story together, act out the plot and use feeling words and expressions to match how the characters feel throughout the story.

- Make your thinking and feelings explicit. Talk about how you feel, why you feel it, and what signs you are giving (even when it's uncomfortable). *"I am happy right now because my friend just called me to say hello, and I haven't talked to him in a long time. Can you tell? I am smiling."*
- Talk aloud about how you respond to your own big feelings: *"I'm going to take a few deep breaths before trying again and see if that helps."*

> **Trap:** Don't tell your child what they feel; ask instead. Two-year-olds strive for independence and may create a power struggle if you are too direct about their thoughts and feelings. You might say, *"You look angry. Is that right?"*

STEP 3 · PRACTICE — Practice to Grow Skills and Develop Habits

- Provide opportunities for your child to meet and interact with other children and people of all ages, races, and cultures. Discuss commonalities, make connections, and how differences help us learn more about ourselves and others.
- Model warm greetings, introduce your child, and facilitate a greeting with any 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.
- If your child is in childcare, create caring, trusting connections with the caregivers alongside your child.
- Recognize effort by using "I notice..." statements like, *"I noticed how you shared your favorite toy with your friend. That is kind of you."*
- Read together. When you read stories together, you engage in an activity that can be deeply connecting for both of you. Reflect on the story, and you will take the learning opportunity one step further. *"I think it was kind of the little boy to share his toys."* 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 — Support Your Child's Development and Success

- Use "Show me…" statements like "*Show me you can share your toys with your friend.*"
- Schedule playdates. Playdates can become an invaluable practice for your child. Playdates build connections and help your child to practice the skills you've taught them.
- Don't move on quickly if your child shows interest in trying something new. Children often need more time to stick with a challenge or pursue a goal.

STEP 5 RECOGNIZE — Recognize Efforts

- Recognize and call out when all is going well. Notice if your child was reluctant to share their snack yesterday but was willing today. *"I noticed you shared your snack with your friend today. That was so kind!"*
- Build celebrations into your everyday routines. Promote joy and happiness by laughing, singing, dancing, hugging, and snuggling to appreciate one another.