

COMPASSION

COMPASSION - sympathy for someone else's feelings, together with the desire to help. Keeness of feeling; openness to understanding and relating to one's own feelings and others; relates to kindness, sensitivity, responsiveness and respect.

How easy is it for us to know what someone else is feeling at any one moment? We all have different degrees of awareness that allow us to perceive what someone else is telling us with their words, and actions or non-actions. Our own perceptions of events are related to personal experience, familiarity and understanding. These combined give us our level of compassion (and sensitivity). Some of us are naturally "built" to be compassionate, while others of us can enhance compassionate thinking by working at it or by learning through example. Our children show us their need to be dealt with in a compassionate way through many non-verbal actions - pouting and shutting us out, sadness, frustration, confusion, loneliness, fear, etc. They need us to be aware of their needs so they, in turn, can respond in kind as they grow into compassionate people.

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The book we read in class today to illustrate Compassion was: Horton Hears a Who by Dr. Seuss.
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QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR CHILD AT HOME:

Talk about times when your family showed compassion for another family. Recess is a time when children display compassion for others at school. Can your child give examples of displaying compassion? How do you know when someone needs compassion?

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Feelings - Aiki

Feelings Between Parents and Kids - by Marcia Conta & M. Reardon

Little Sunshine - Children's Book of Virtues

If You Had to Choose, What Would You Do? - Sandra McLeod Humphrey

COMPASSION QUOTES:

"The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart." Helen Keller

KIND

KIND (KINDNESS) - to be friendly, gentle, thoughtful, extending of a good deed; to do good rather than harm. Generosity and goodness in action. Sensitive and supportive to the needs of others.

To possess the virtue or quality of kindness may be the true mark of humanity in action. When kindness is at the root of an act or feeds the motivation of human interaction, the results reflect a true gentleness and sincerity. When kindness is the trademark of a person there can be no better quality because one who operates on the kindness principle is giving and selfless. Rewards are felt by kind people in the acts they do and the interactions they promote.

Think of ways acts of kindness have enriched your life, both in the giving and receiving. Discuss these with your child and ask her for similar examples in her own life.

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The book we read in class today to illustrate Kind or Kindness was, "Thank you, Mr. Falkner" by Patricia Polacco. This story emphasizes how significant a kind and caring person can help to positively change a person's self-perception.
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QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR CHILD FOR DISCUSSION AT HOME:

Talk about three ways kindness can make a difference at home (the smallest act of kindness can make a big difference).

How can the use of harshness and criticism (the opposite of kindness) be harmful when we interact with people? What are some examples?

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Kid's Random Acts of Kindness (Forward by Rosalynn Carter) - Many of the passages from the book highlight themes such as sharing, charity, verbal kindness, generosity, acts of kindness, cheerfulness & thoughtful selflessness. The passages are written in a child's own words and help bring the concepts to life.

The Lion and the Mouse - Aesop

Kindness to Animals - poem (January is Kindness to Animals month)

Beauty and the Beast - many versions

The Cottage at the End of the Lane - Elaine Mills

The Legend of the Dipper - Children's Book of Virtues

QUOTES FOR KINDNESS:

"Kind words bring life, but cruel words crush your spirit."

"...that best portion of a good man's life. His little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and love." William Wordsworth

HELPFUL

HELPFUL - give assistance to; unselfish; willing to share with others.

Helpful is a word we hear in many contexts. "Oh, he is such a helpful boy." Or "Gee, I can't imagine a more helpful neighbor." Helpful can mean many things. What qualities are present when we consider the word "helpful" in relation to a person? Well, a helpful person may be someone who is "there" when needed; or available to step in at the last minute; or a listening ear when called upon for comfort; or willing to give a hand when someone calls. These definitions represent an attitude; a giving of oneself because of a genuine want to do something rather than an obligation to do something. Being truly helpful means recognizing the dignity of all human beings; being a friend to those in need; being courteous and respectful.

Being helpful can include volunteering to help and working on service projects to assist people in need. Can you think of a project that could use your help? How can you make a difference? Is there such a thing as too much help? Can being helpful have a negative consequence?

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BOOK WE READ IN CLASS: Silver Packages by Cynthia Rylant

Ask your student about the helping messages in this story. How was Frankie helped and how did he give back?

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SUGGESTED READINGS:

Giving Thanks - Chief Jake Swamp

The Giving Tree - Shel Silverstein

The Gift of the Magi - O. Henry

The Legend of the Dipper - Children's Book of Virtues

The Lion and the Mouse - Aesop

HELPFUL QUOTE:

"Helpfulness is an attitude"

FRIENDSHIP

FRIENDSHIP - the state of being friends.

There is little else in life as rewarding, comforting or satisfying as a true friend or a cultivated friendship. Friendships can be many things; a buddy to play soccer with, a person to share your dreams with, a pen pal to write a letter to. Friends are people you care about and that care about you. Friends stick up for one another. Friends are people you can trust. Friends wouldn't intentionally hurt you or your feelings. Friends wouldn't take advantage of you. Friends like a lot of the things you like but also have opinions of their own (just like you!). Friends are people you respect and admire. Friends are true blue and like you for YOU. Friends are a gift!

What are some ways to be a good friend?

Can you list some things that a good friend would not do?

If you have a conflict with a friend, what are some things you could do to resolve it?

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The book we read in class today to illustrate Friendship was: Victoria's Smile by Rita Geller. How important was it for Victoria to have understanding friends? Many times friends have trouble or illness in their lives. How can we as friends comfort them and let them know we care?

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SUGGESTED READINGS:

Blow Me a Kiss, Miss Lilly by Nancy White Carlstrom

The Giving Tree by Shel Silverstein

The Pasture - a poem by Robert Frost

Little Boy Blue - a poem by Eugene Field

Why Frog and Snake Never Play Together - African Folk Tale

Frog and Toad are Friends by Arnold Lobel

FRIENDSHIP QUOTES:

"Friends are not luxuries - they're necessities." - The Boys Town Center

"Friendship is a virtue - and also it is one of the most indispensable requirements of life." - Aristotle

"There can be no friendship without forgiveness." - Phillip Lopate

"You need to be a friend in order to have friends." -

"Let your friends know how much you appreciate them and tell them frequently how much you treasure the gift of their friendship."

SHARING

SHARING - working together for a common purpose; to work with others for a mutual benefit; to work toward a common goal and using resources together.

From 20 Teachable Virtues: when a child behaves with honesty, respect and empathy then he will naturally cooperate with others because he respects them, can put himself in their shoes, and will treat them fairly. Children who share do not necessarily do everything a person tells them to do. In fact, looking out for other's welfare, as well as one's own, makes sharing work. By sharing, everyone gets a chance to feel special and worthy.

What are some benefits of promoting a sharing mindset?

How can you encourage someone to become a more sharing or cooperating person?

What are some things you can do at school and home that will promote sharing?

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IN CLASS WE READ: The Giving Tree by Shel Silverstein

How has the boy treated the tree? How is the "behavior" of the tree different than that of the boy? Can each learn something valuable from the other in this book?

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SUGGESTED READINGS:

Chubbo's Pool - Betsy Lewin

Stone Soup adapted by Mary Rowitz

Smokey Night

The Turnip

In a Tight Squeeze (Winnie the Pooh) - A.A. Milne

Can you set some goals or activities at home to show that you are a helpful family member?
How many goals did you set?

Recognize and praise a helpful attitude at home, then celebrate your helpfulness as a family.

HELPFUL QUOTE:

"None of us is as smart as all of us."

"What is harder to do, to share you material wealth or to share yourself?"

EMPATHY

EMPATHY - ability to share another's feelings; showing care and consideration; respect for life, for property, for parents, for elders, for nature, and for the beliefs and rights of others. Courtesy, politeness and manners. Self-respect and the avoidance of self-criticism.

FOR THE PARENTS:

Respect is attitude and action - of honoring people and caring about their rights and feelings, showing courtesy by treating one another with respect, speaking to others with honor, respecting other's belongings, speaking to and acting with dignity toward others. Elders, parents, grandparents, teachers, authority figures should be extended the respect they are entitled to and hopefully earn by their actions. We can respect an idea, a person, a belief or concept, and a place.

Sue Bender in her book Plain and Simple referred to the virtue of empathy and respect by comparing it to the Amish nine-patch quilt where each patch represented a different aspect of the virtue. The nine patches (thus the nine aspects of empathy) were listed as follows. Patch #1 - respect the process and value of the product in all work; Patch #2 - respect time and all the achievements of each moment; Patch #3 - respect the ordinary, in the ordinary is stability; Patch #4 - respect home, as place and solace; Patch #5 - respect community and encompass the greater brotherhood of alliances; Patch #6 - respect life as art; see art in the simple objects; Patch #7 respect life's limits as freedoms; Patch #8 - respect contrasts and diversity; Patch #9 - respect choice.

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The book we read in class today to illustrate the virtue Empathy was: Sachiko Means Happiness by Kimiko Sakai.

How does Sachiko remember her grandmother? Why is she confused by her grandmother's reaction to her? How does Sachiko become more empathic toward her grandmother?
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List some ways young people can show empathy for older people. Make an "empathy (or respect) chart". Using the left hand column "Who" list the categories of people and things that deserve empathy. In the right hand column "How" identify how empathy can be shown for that person or thing listed.

How is sympathy different from empathy? When do you show someone sympathy instead of empathy (and vice versa)?

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Brother Eagle, Sister Sky - Susan Jeffers

Kids Who Make A Difference - Joyce M. Roche

The Big Book For Our Planet - Ann Durell

EMPATHY QUOTE:

"I am respectful. I treat others and myself as we deserve to be treated."

Are They Being Caring?

Read the story. Are these people being caring? Circle yes or no.
Then write why you answered the way that you did.

1. John really wanted to borrow his friend's scooter. For two weeks straight, John helped his friend with his math homework, hoping that his friend would let him borrow the scooter. His friend never let John borrow the scooter, and this made John very angry.

Is John being caring? Yes No

Why did you answer the way you did? _____

2. Rachelle was very excited to go to lunch with Amy. Amy didn't really want to go to lunch with Rachelle, but she agreed to go with her because it meant so much to Rachelle. Amy's friend, Brian, went with them, too. During lunch, Amy and Brian ignored Rachelle and only talked to each other.

Is Amy being caring? Yes No

Why did you answer the way you did? _____

3. Curtis was baby-sitting his neighbor's child when Curtis' friend Pam called him on his cell phone. Pam was very sad and really needed Curtis to come over and cheer her up. Curtis said no, because he was baby-sitting and couldn't leave the house. Curtis said he would be happy to talk to her on the phone. Pam was angry that Curtis wouldn't come over.

Is Curtis being caring? Yes No

Why did you answer the way you did? _____
