



Peer Education Project

Why Kindness Matters



A Guide for Parents and Caregivers



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"I always try to put myself in someone else's shoes before I react and remember how I would like to be treated."

**Peer Educator
Peer Education Project**

Why is kindness good for our mental health?

There are many definitions of what it means to be kind and it is often entwined with related concepts like empathy, compassion, and altruism. Primarily, kindness is seen as choosing to do something for ourselves or others that is motivated by genuine, warm feelings.

“Acts of kindness” do not have to be grand gestures, they can be as small as actively listening to your child or young person as they talk about their day or demonstrating how to be accepting towards differences.

It may feel intuitive that kindness can help others, but there is a growing body of research to show that being kind also has benefits for our own mental health and wellbeing.

In fact, studies have found that being kind can:

-  reduce stress;
-  improve our mood;
-  increase self-esteem, happiness and life satisfaction;
-  create a sense of belonging;
-  reduce loneliness;
-  keep things in perspective; and
-  make the world a happier place by motivating others to be kind too!

We found that 63% of UK adults agree that when other people are kind it has a positive impact on their mental health, and the same proportion agree that being kind to others has a positive impact on their mental health.

Top tips for showing kindness

There are many ways that we can show kindness to ourselves and others, but if your child or young person is struggling to get started, here are some top tips to remind them of:

Keep others in mind

Part of being kind is considering the feelings of others, so it is important that your child or young person understands that kindness is something that others find genuinely helpful, not what we assume will be useful for them.

Suggest that they do things that others are not doing already. For example, if they want to donate to a foodbank, help them to find out what the foodbank needs before buying or collecting things.



Pace themselves



It's very easy to give away all our energy.

Remind your child or young person that kindness has to start with them – taking time to be kind to themselves will help to build up more energy for showing kindness to others.

Start small

Encourage your child or young person to start small, so they do not become overwhelmed or give more than they can. Helping others doesn't have to cost money or take a lot of time.

For your child or young person, it could start with calling a friend they haven't spoken to in a while or smiling and saying hello to a neighbour when they pass them on their way to school.



Do something they enjoy!

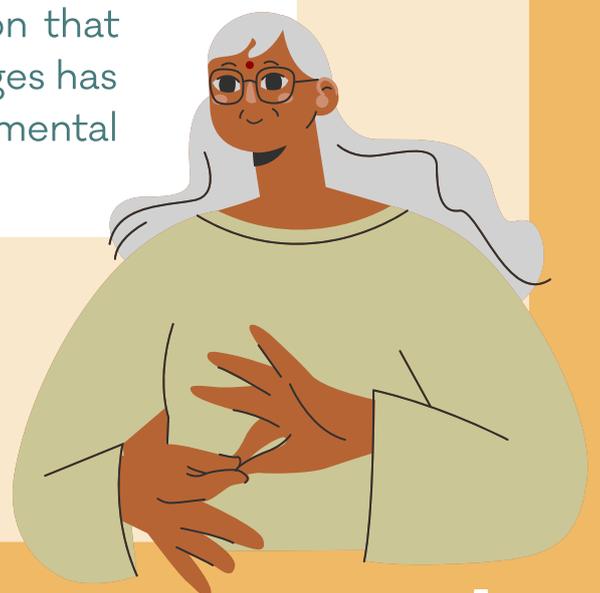
Your child or young person can share their skills and interests with others as a way of showing kindness. For example, offering to help with technology, sharing cooking recipes and tips, or inviting someone to play with them.

Remind them that acts of kindness can also be for yourself, so they should do things that they enjoy!

Remember that people of all ages need kindness

Remind your child or young person that showing kindness to people of all ages has the same positive effect on their mental health and wellbeing.

Encourage pupils to think of people around them they could show kindness to, such as other people in their family, school or community.



How to support your child or young person to show kindness...

Kindness can be shown in many different ways and it can look different to everyone. You can play a key role in helping your child or young person to have the greatest effect by supporting and encouraging them to find what works for them, and for others.

...to themselves

Being kind to ourselves can be even harder than being kind to others. It is very easy to hold higher standards for our own behaviour, thoughts, and feelings than others, but over time this can chip away at our confidence and self-esteem. This is especially true for children and young people.

It is important to remind your child or young person to top themselves up with self-kindness from time-to-time. Nobody can pour from an empty cup! You can encourage this by supporting your child or young person to do the following things:



Spend 30 minutes every day doing something they love.

Listening to a favourite song, reading a favourite book, playing sports, spending time outdoors, speaking with friends.

Doing things we love can help to boost our mood and clear our minds and, with a clear mind, we are more likely to be patient and kind to ourselves, and others.

Praise themselves.

Every morning, encourage your child or young person to find one thing to compliment or congratulate themselves on and ask them to try writing it down for later so they can remind themselves of it.



Practicing this daily will help kind thoughts about themselves come to mind more freely and often.

"I made a mistake"

Practice 'thought-swaps'.

Encourage your child or young person to practice training their brain to swap negative thoughts about themselves with more balanced ones.

For example, instead of thinking 'I can't cope with this', swap it for 'how can I manage this?'.

Encourage them to write down the new thoughts to remember the swaps in the future.

"I'm learning"

Be patient.

Remind your child or young person to treat themselves as patiently as they would treat a best friend.

Support your child or young person to find what helps them to feel calmer and less frustrated – maybe it's listening to soothing music or going outside to get some fresh air.



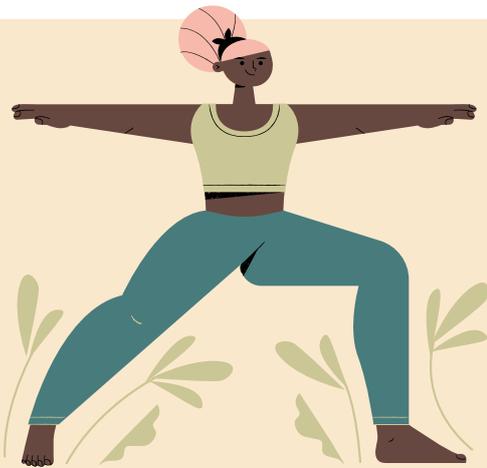
Be kind to others.

Research shows that being kind to others makes us feel good and has a positive effect on our own mental health and wellbeing, so encourage your child or young person to try some of the following things!



Practice mindfulness.

Mindfulness is about paying attention to what is happening in your mind and body right now, without judgement. Encourage your child or young person to spend some time finding mindfulness activities that work for them.



They could try using a meditation app, like Headspace, or taking a social media-free hour and instead spend it drawing or writing about their day.

Remember – we learn by example! So try practicing these yourself and talk about what works for you with your child or young person.



How to support your child or young person to show kindness... ...to others

You could encourage your child or young person to:

- ☀️ share how they are kind to themselves with others.
- ☀️ call a friend they haven't spoken to in a while.
- ☀️ buy recycled and recyclable products.
- ☀️ help a friend with their homework.
- ☀️ pick up some rubbish lying around in the street or playground.
- ☀️ offer their seat on public transport to someone who may need it more than them.
- ☀️ smile and say hello to people they pass every day.
- ☀️ volunteer at a local charity shop – this can act as work experience too!
- ☀️ donate clothes to a charity or homeless shelter.
- ☀️ be kind in the way they use social media.



How to support your child or young person to show kindness... ...at home

Encouraging and supporting your child or young person to be kind can start at home.

You could suggest:

Helping out

Encourage your child or young person to help a sibling with their homework or teach them a new skill, or to support with the gardening or housework. This could be made more fun by setting challenges or encouraging them to choose their favourite task.

Alphabet Gratitude Game

Play the alphabet thank you game – a fun gratitude activity for long car rides, or any other moments plagued with boredom! For each letter of the alphabet, in a chain, have everyone name something they are thankful for.



Neighbourhood support

Suggest they bake cakes or make cards for people in the neighbourhood, or join in with community events like litter picking.



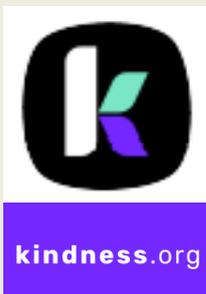
Find out more

**MENTALLY
HEALTHY
SCHOOLS**

Use this [Kindness Calendar](#) created for Mental Health Awareness Week 2020 with your child or young person to encourage kindness.



Encourage your child or young person to reflect on the power of kindness by using this [Kindness Activity Pack](#). The pack suggests fun activities to do at home while encouraging small acts of kindness to support your child, family and community.



Try this [Kindness Quest activity](#) with your child or young person. Encourage them to check off each kind act that they notice and record the total at the end to help identify small acts of kindness. Sometimes, kindness is hiding in plain sight!



[Print off and decorate these kindness notes](#) with your child or young person to encourage kindness in your home. Help them hand the notes out to friends or family, or even leave them somewhere for a stranger to find!

If home-schooling, [try these short lessons for teaching about kindness at home](#).



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