



Cultivating Kindness

Tips for Elementary Parents

Kindness is not a quality that children are born with—it is something they learn with practice and time.

Use the following tips to help your child develop kindness and empathy.

Model kind behavior

Look for ways to demonstrate kindness for your child. Help a neighbor with their yard work. Speak kindly to the cashier at the grocery store. Offer the mailman a bottle of water on a hot day. You are your child's most important role model, and they will learn from your example.

Identify and label nonverbal cues

Encourage your child to notice facial expressions and body language. For example, "*Annie is crossing her arms and frowning. I think she is upset. How can we help?*" The key to empathy is understanding the perspective of others.

Point out the kindness of others

When someone is kind to you or your child, say something about it. "*It was so nice of the woman at the store to let us go ahead of her in line.*" Also, be sure to acknowledge and praise your child when they show kindness.

Spread the joy of helping others

Allow your child to experience how good it feels to help others. Donate books and toys to children in need, or rake a neighbor's leaves. Give your child ample opportunity to develop a giving spirit.



To review, watch this quick video!

VIDEO

Kindness Challenge

Over the course of one week, encourage your child to complete as many of the acts of kindness on this list as they can. Let your child check off each one as it's completed. At the end of the week, talk about how it feels to be kind, and praise your child for their efforts.

- Give a compliment to a friend or classmate.

- Smile at someone you don't know and say "hello."

- Let someone go ahead of you in line.

- Write a thank you note or make a card for a friend.

- Open and hold the door for someone.

- Do something around the house without being asked.

- Tell someone they did a good job.

- Let someone else play with a toy that you wanted to play with.

- Invite someone who is all alone to play or sit with you.



Building Confidence

Tips for Elementary Parents

It's natural for children to master some skills easily and to struggle with others. But when children can take pride in their accomplishments and persevere despite failure, their self-confidence will grow.

Keep reading to find out how you can help nurture self-confidence in your child.

Encourage new experiences

Whether it's trying a new sport, learning how to use a camera, or exploring a more difficult hiking trail, allowing your child to try different things and conquer new challenges will help build their self-confidence and boost their self-esteem.

Delegate responsibility

Give your child age-appropriate household tasks, such as taking out the trash, helping put away laundry, taking care of a pet, and making their bed each day. Make sure that tasks are completed, and praise your child for their effort. Conquering even simple tasks can lead to big gains in self-confidence.

Demonstrate perseverance

You are your child's most important role model, and letting your child see you tackle obstacles, overcome adversity, and achieve personal goals is invaluable. Show pride in your accomplishments ("I ran three miles for the first time today!") and grace in your failures ("I messed that up, but I'll do better next time"). Most importantly, let your child see that you are human and imperfect.

Celebrate hard work

When it comes to mastering a new skill, there will be setbacks and failure. Whether your child succeeds or not, praise their hard work. Remind your child that sometimes it takes practice and time to see results—and let your child know that you value their effort, no matter the outcome.

Don't dwell on mistakes

How you respond to the mistakes your child makes sets the tone for how your child will respond to them. Instead of focusing on what your child has done wrong, remind them that mistakes are a part of life—and that mistakes are opportunities for growth. This kind of attitude will make it easier for your child to take future mistakes in stride.

Set goals

Goals give children direction, focus, and purpose. Encourage your child to set both short- and long-term goals. When children accomplish their goals—no matter how big or small—they feel stronger and more capable.

Let your child fail

As a parent, one of the greatest challenges is allowing your child to fail. However, experiencing failure teaches your child two valuable lessons: that failure is not the end of the world, and that sometimes, it can be overcome or reversed with additional effort.

Love your child unconditionally

As your child grows into a young adult, there will be high and low grades on tests, games won and lost, and good and bad decisions made. Make sure your child knows that you love them—when they succeed, and especially when they don't.



VIDEO

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Fostering Patience

Tips for Elementary Parents

Today's children are being raised in a world where much of what they want and need is instantly available. This can make it hard for children to practice patience—a quality that will be important for them to have throughout their lives.

Here are some tips on how you can teach your child to be a more patient person, even when it's hard.

Know your child

Depending on your child's personality, they may be either more or less inclined to be patient. For example, a child who is calm and easygoing may have an easier time being patient than one who is a bit more excitable. Understanding your child's unique personality can help you adjust your methods and expectations accordingly.

Show what patience looks like

Use every opportunity you have to model patience for your child. For example, when the line at the grocery store is long, avoid complaining or rolling your eyes. Instead, stay calm, smile, and remain positive. When your child sees you cope with these situations in a patient manner, they are more likely to follow suit.

Teach your child about time

Many children have no concept of the difference between one minute and five or ten. When you ask your child to wait, set a timer for the allotted time. Also find opportunities to connect time with actions, such as, "We are going to eat dinner in 30 minutes."

Provide opportunities to practice

When your child asks for something, ask them to please wait, especially if you're in the middle of something. Your child needs to understand that your time is valuable too—and teaching your child delayed gratification is key to instilling patience.

Be prepared

There are times when your child will likely have to wait for an extended period of time, such as at the doctor's office. To avoid putting your child in a situation that requires more patience than you can realistically expect, think ahead and come prepared with activities to keep your child occupied.

Don't rely on technology

While it's okay to use technology to entertain your child once in awhile, don't rely on it too often. When a child is constantly entertained with a phone or tablet, he or she misses out on opportunities to learn and use other coping mechanisms. Also, your child will come to expect having access to their devices, and will react negatively when they are not available.

Make waiting rewarding

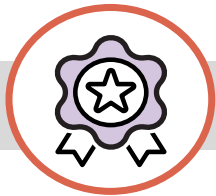
Deliberately choose activities to do with your child that make waiting gratifying. Bake cookies together or start a vegetable plant from seed and monitor its daily progress.

Praise patience

Developing patience takes time and practice. Be sure to acknowledge when your child has demonstrated patience. Conversely, when your child is impatient, calmly reiterate your expectations, and explain how they can do better.



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Teaching Responsibility

Tips for Elementary Parents

For children, being responsible is about more than just doing chores around the house. Being responsible also includes:

- ▶ keeping promises
- ▶ being reliable
- ▶ honoring commitments
- ▶ behaving appropriately in different social situations
- ▶ being a good citizen—at home, at school, and in the community

Here are some tips for helping your child be a responsible family member, friend, and community member.

Define responsibility for your child

Responsibility can mean different things to different people. To help your child understand what responsibility means, explain that it is a job, a promise, or some other situation in which others depend on them. For example, *“Homework is a responsibility. Your teacher depends on you to do your homework so that you can be a successful student,”* or *“If you make a snack, I am depending on you to clean up after yourself.”*

Start at an early age

It can be tempting for parents to do everything for their child, especially when they are young. But giving children small tasks they are able to complete on their own increases self-esteem, and makes it much more likely that they will be responsible with future tasks.

Break big tasks down

If your child is responsible for completing a big job or task, show them how to break it down into smaller, more manageable parts. For example, if you ask your child to clean their room, turn it into three separate jobs: making the bed, picking up clothes off the floor, and taking out the trash. Learning to divide large projects into small parts is a skill your child will use for years to come.

Hold your child accountable

Your child will not perfectly or completely perform every task they are given. That's normal. *How you react to this is what's important.* If your child doesn't complete a task or does it poorly, let your child know that they have not fulfilled their responsibility, and decide on an appropriate consequence. More importantly, follow through. If you don't, your child may begin to place less importance on being responsible.

Set an example

Always follow through on your own responsibilities. When you make a promise, keep it. When you tell your child you will do something, make sure you do it.

Labeling and modeling responsible behaviors will also show your child that being responsible is important. *"It's my turn to drive the carpool to soccer practice tonight. They are counting on me to get them there on time, so we need to leave soon."*

Praise your child

If your child struggles to follow through on something, but has made a good effort, focus on what they have done rather than what they haven't. Compliment them when they do something well, and celebrate when they finish a task, no matter how big or small.



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Encouraging Honesty

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Young children mostly understand that honesty is best, but it is also natural for them to be tempted to hide the truth—especially when they know that their actions could disappoint loved ones, or get them in trouble.

Here are some tips for helping your child learn to choose honesty, even when it's hard.

Start early

Begin talking to your child about the value of honesty when they are very young. Explain what it means to be honest, and emphasize the link between honesty and trustworthiness. Make honesty a part of your daily conversation so that your child will understand that it is expected.

Be a good role model

If you want your child to be honest, then you must be honest yourself. When you lie in front of your child, even if you consider it a “small” lie, it teaches your child that lying is acceptable. Admit that sometimes being truthful can be hard, even for you. Make open and honest communication a priority in your home for everyone.

Reward the truth

When your child is truthful in a difficult situation, let them know how proud you are of them. Rewarding your child with praise and affection when they have been honest reinforces positive behavior, builds your child's self-confidence, and increases the likelihood your child will be honest in the future.

My child lied. Now what?

Despite your best intentions, your child will lie. All children do. How you respond when your child lies to you will shape how honest they choose to be in the future.

First, it helps to understand *why* children may be dishonest. Here are some reasons:

- ▶ to avoid consequences
- ▶ to impress classmates and friends
- ▶ to avoid hurting someone's feelings (in other words, a "white" lie)
- ▶ to avoid disappointing parents or loved ones

What you can do...

▶ **Keep your cool.** When you catch your child in a lie, remain calm. Yelling or handing out a severe punishment will make your child less likely to tell the truth in the future. Instead, reinforce that you expect honesty, and work with your child to come up with a plan to make amends.

▶ **Focus on the behavior.** Whenever your child lies or misbehaves, focus on the behavior that needs to change—not the child.

▶ **Give your child a chance to fess up.** If you know that your child has lied to you, give them a chance to tell you the truth.

"I'm going to give you some time to think about what you said. Then I'm going to ask you again, and I hope you will tell me the truth."

"I know you didn't really do your homework. Let's talk about why that's not a good idea."

Most importantly, remind your child that you will always love them—and that nothing could ever change that.



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Inspiring Citizenship

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Being a good citizen means working to make the world a better place for everyone. For children, this primarily means being a good family member, friend, and classmate. Of course, it can also mean lending a helping hand to those in need, as well as being a responsible member of your community.

Here are some ways you can inspire your child to be a good citizen.

Start small

As a citizen of your household, your child should be expected to take on age-appropriate tasks at home. They might help plant a small vegetable garden, sweep the front porch, or put up holiday decorations. Helping with household tasks gives children a sense of pride and responsibility.

Read books

Books are great for encouraging discussions on citizenship. Look for age-appropriate books that promote diversity, inclusion, helping others, and caring for the environment. Try to relate what you read in books to your own community—and help your child see how they can be a good citizen.

Make community connections

Help your child get to know your community. Ride the bus together, visit the library, and play at a public park. As you explore, point out any people you see who are helping to keep your community clean and safe—police officers, park workers, bus drivers.

Talk about voting

Discuss upcoming elections and talk about the issues your community is voting on. *What will it mean if school levy passes, or doesn't pass?* Take your child with you to the polls and allow your child to witness the voting process. As your child gets older, you can talk more about state and federal candidates and issues.

Get involved

Even very young children are capable of getting involved in community service activities. Identify opportunities that interest your child and keep them engaged. Here are some simple ideas to try:

- ▶ Have your child help you choose books to donate to a local book drive.
- ▶ Walk around a local park or school playground and pick up trash together.
- ▶ Make cards and drawings for people who live in nursing homes or assisted living facilities.
- ▶ Host a lemonade stand and give the money to a charity.
- ▶ Offer to help a neighbor with household tasks or yard work.

Raise a good human

Good citizens all have the same basic qualities: they are kind, respectful, compassionate, and inclusive. They feel a responsibility to make the world better for all people, and they care deeply about giving their time to meet the needs of others. Make it a priority to raise your child to embody these characteristics, and to find the joy in being a good citizen.



VIDEO

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