

Know! To Practice Kindness

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When kindness is a priority in the lives of young people, they are likely to have an increased overall sense of well-being, purpose and happiness.

We all want our children to be happy, right? So as parents and teachers, we find ourselves going out of our way, doing many small acts of kindness every day, solely for their benefit. But what we quickly learn is that these acts of kindness actually benefit us as well, even if unintended. Why? Because we care deeply about our children and students, and it feels good to do good for them.

The same holds true for our children. When they take the opportunity to do something good for someone because they made someone else feel happy. Such good deeds and the spreading of kindness need not be complicated.

Try sharing these simple, yet effective ideas with your teens:

- Hold the door, give up your seat or let someone go in front of you.
- Leave change in the vending machine.
- Help out around the house without being asked to do so.
- Send someone a text of 'thanks.'
- Hand out a compliment.
- Say good morning to your bus driver or teacher.
- Help a younger sibling with homework.
- Pick up litter around school.
- Shovel a neighbor's driveway.
- Stand up for someone being bullied.
- Donate your old sports equipment.
- Visit an elderly neighbor.
- Hug your parents; call your grandparents.

Of course if you're wanting to instill the importance of kindness in youth, it is best taught by example.

In addition to positive role modeling, you can help youth put kindness into practice through an easy and enlightening activity. Whether at home or in the classroom, have each child (as well as yourself) record ONE act of kindness per day that they engaged in during a chosen month. At the end of each week, take time to share and learn from each other's good deeds. This kind of sharing is also beneficial because it encourages reflection and helps bring meaning to their actions.

It's important to help youth focus on the importance of kindness, keeping in mind that goodness breeds further goodness, and a single act can influence dozens more.