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Planting Seeds of Kindness with Your Little One

It is never too early to start planting seeds of kindness with your little one. From simply saying “please” and “thank you” to drawing a picture to cheer someone up, you can foster caring and compassionate behavior in your child with these valuable tips and activities.

Building Empathy

Encourage your child to identify and label his own emotions to help him understand what it means to be empathetic and compassionate. When children have language to describe their own feelings, they are better able to understand the feelings of others. When you read books together, talk about how the characters are feeling. Encourage your child to notice facial cues and body language, such as if a character is pouting or crossing his arms. Ask, “How do you think the boy is feeling and why?” When children are able to take the perspective of others, they’re more likely to show compassion to people in their own lives.

Kindness is Doing

Help your child understand how simple actions such as smiling at a stranger, saying “please” and “thank you,” asking “how are you?” or giving someone a hug plants seeds of kindness. Encouraging your child to show kindness by asking a friend who seems sad, “Are you okay?” or “Can I help you?” teaches that kindness is responding to the needs of others without expecting a thank you in return, and that helping others can make you feel good, too.



Giving is Caring

Model what it means to show love and kindness by giving to those in need. You could donate books or toys to a local charity or organization, or throw a bake sale and let your child help you with the baking—then donate the proceeds to a cause or charity that you choose together. Or encourage your child to make a card for someone in her community, such as a fire fighter, a librarian, or a school crossing guard, to show appreciation and gratitude. A picture or note not only brightens someone’s day but can also make your child feel good about herself by thinking about others. Remember, no acts of kindness are too small.

Be the Example

Finally, remember you are your child’s best role model. Your preschooler learns by watching, so be sure to demonstrate acts of kindness and lead by example. You can model caring behavior in your own relationships. Include your child when you are doing something helpful, and explain why to demonstrate the empathy you’d like your child to have for others. Talk about what you are grateful for and encourage your child to do the same.

Together, let’s make the world a little brighter and kinder!

