

Teaching Compassion to Kids

Fostering compassion can defeat bullying

As [parents](#) and professionals continue to address the problem of [bullying](#) among young people, experts advise that fostering compassion in young people is among the best ways to prevent verbal, physical, and emotional aggression from taking root. Here are seven ways to help develop compassion as a [character trait](#) and behavioral style in your child:

1. Be a Role Model

Children may listen to your words, but more importantly, they learn from observing your actions. When you have a chance to practice a random act of kindness, do so! When you encounter a maddening customer service situation, express your displeasure in words that show respect for the dignity of the person you are addressing.

2. Let Your Child Experience Compassion Firsthand

While showing compassion to others is a top way to role model this value for your child, allowing your child to experience compassion first-hand is even more meaningful. When your child is hurt or sick, be sure to provide abundant TLCC (tender, loving, compassionate care.) It may sound obvious, but tending to your child when he is feeling down or under the weather is the best way to teach him how to show compassion to others.

3. Talk About Compassion

Most children can learn about true compassion by seeing and feeling this trait acted out, but when parents talk explicitly about acts of compassion, they communicate its importance as a prized family value. As you watch television or movies with your child, be sure to point out instances where compassion was shown-or should have been shown! Talk about people

who particularly need compassion, such as the elderly and children living in poverty.

4. Volunteer Your Time

When children become actively involved in acts of showing compassion to others, they learn about this value in a very deep and meaningful way. Find age-appropriate ways to introduce your child to volunteering, such as visiting a nursing home and sharing a craft activity with a resident, serving a meal at a homeless shelter, helping to organize a canned food drive, collecting coats to donate to needy children, or even participating in a charity walk for a specific cause are all great ways to get kids thinking compassionately about the needs of others.

5. Give Your Child a Pet

This is certainly not a step to be taken lightly or impulsively, but it is worth giving serious consideration to bringing a pet into your home, as a way to foster compassion. Children who take care of [pets](#) learn wonderful values such as responsibility, unconditional [love](#), [empathy](#), and compassion for all living things.

6. Read All About It

Children's stories are often great sources for teaching young people specific values. Children's books are great for providing a window into the experiences of others. Books like *My Secret Bully* by Trudi Ludwig are especially effective in [countering bullying](#) among young people by helping to foster feelings of empathy for [bullying](#) victims. *Charlotte's Web* is another great, classic tale that highlights [friendship](#) and compassion. For older kids, check out biographies of famous figureheads of compassion, such as the Dalai Lama or Florence Nightingale.

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7. Make-a-Wish

Acts of life-changing compassion can be only a click away. Use the internet to introduce your child to different charitable organizations that provide compassionate assistance to others. The Make-a-Wish Foundation provides hope, strength, and joy to children with life-threatening medical conditions. While for younger kids, the site may be too heart-wrenching or scary, older kids can have a truly impactful experience of being able to provide tangible help and joy to a peer. The experience can be life-changing for both giver and receiver.