

Family Viewing Guide

Character and Life Skills: Cooperation

Grade Level: 3-5

The Facts

Research provides the following information about cooperation:

1. People, in general, have cooperative instincts as they see cooperation as benefiting them and the group in the long run (Harvard researchers David G. Rand, Joshua D. Greene, Martin A. Nowack, as published in *Nature*, September 20, 2012)
2. The **International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences** (2008) lists five types of cooperation:
 - Automatic cooperation is unplanned and usually happens when the group has the same goals and dreams.
 - Traditional cooperation is guided by traditional social guidelines, rules set up by society.
 - Contractual cooperation happens in business and government and the terms are agreed upon by all involved.
 - Directed cooperation is when a group follows commands, such as an army or a large company, or when volunteers show up with no experience, only a drive to help.
 - Spontaneous cooperation is based on relationships and need: people work together when they feel they have a common cause or need.

Start a Conversation with Your Kids

1. What does cooperation mean to you?
2. What type of cooperation do you feel we practice in this family? Why?
3. How do you feel about working together to complete a task? What is easy about it? What is challenging?
4. What can you do differently to make cooperating with others more enjoyable?

Advice from the Experts

PBS Parents gives the following advice to parents on teaching cooperation:

1. **Help kids understand what cooperation means.** Cooperation is a big word and a complicated skill. Break down this concept for them by telling them that cooperation means 1) taking turns, 2) working together, and 3) sharing.
2. **Model cooperation skills at home and with friends.** Modeling not only helps teach kids what cooperation looks like, it also demonstrates your belief in the importance and value of cooperation. When you cooperate, your kids will likely follow your lead.
3. **Use specific praise to encourage children's efforts to cooperate.** Praising children's efforts along the way toward mastery can keep them growing and developing.
4. **Plan activities that encourage kids to cooperate.**