

Family Viewing Guide

Character and Life Skills: **Kindness**

Grade Level: **3-5**

The Facts

A study by **The Huffington Post** (2015) states the following facts about the side effects of kindness:

1. **Kindness makes us happier.** When we do something kind for someone, we feel good. The “good feeling” we get causes elevated levels of dopamine in the brain so we get a natural high, often called the “Helper’s High.”
2. **Kindness gives us healthier hearts.** Acts of kindness are often accompanied by emotional warmth. Emotional warmth produces oxytocin in the brain. Oxytocin causes other chemicals to release in our body that reduce our blood pressure.
3. **Kindness makes for better relationships.** Kindness reduces the emotional distance between two people, so we feel more “bonded.” Our evolutionary ancestors had to learn to work together. The stronger the emotional bonds within groups, the greater the chances of survival, so “kindness genes” were etched into the human genome.
4. **Kindness is contagious.** When we’re kind, we inspire others to be kind and it creates a ripple effect that spreads outwards to our friends’ friends’ friends. This can sometimes be referred to as the “pay it forward” ripple effect.

Start a Conversation with Your Kids

1. How do you define kindness?
2. Have you ever been on the receiving end of an act of kindness? How did it make you feel?
3. How do you feel after you are kind to someone else?
4. How can you show kindness throughout your day? How do you think this would change your relationships with others?

Advice from the Experts

The five strategies to raise moral, caring children, per the **Washington Post**:

1. **Make caring for others a priority.** Children need to learn to balance their needs with the needs of others. A big part of children learning that caring for others is a top priority is holding children to high ethical expectations such as honoring their commitments, even if it makes them unhappy.
2. **Provide opportunities for children to practice caring and gratitude.** Studies show that people who are in the habit of expressing gratitude are more likely to be helpful, generous, compassionate, and forgiving-and they’re also more likely to be happy and healthy.
3. **Expand your child’s circle of concern.** Children need to learn to listen closely and attend to those in their immediate circle and zoom out, by taking in the big picture and considering the many perspectives of others. They need to consider how their decisions can ripple out and harm various members of their community.

