

Building

emotional learning and literacy
Family Connections

Capital District
Child Care Council Encouraging Literacy Education and Parent Engagement (LEAPE)

Teaching Kindness

Teaching children about kindness helps build community. Simply telling children to be kind is not a very effective strategy because kindness is such an abstract concept for young children. Preschool children have a vague sense of what kindness is. The act of being kind involves thinking about the needs of another person and then taking a compassionate or caring action in response to that thought. Adults play a key role in guiding and providing children with opportunities for kindness.

What you can do...

Make it routine: Create a ritual in your family schedule to take time and think about others. Bed time can be a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the day. Share one kind thing you saw or did during the day. Begin this routine by modeling something you saw or did. Invite your child to share one of their own examples of kindness.

Model Kindness: Use the natural opportunities that pop up during the day. For example, while waiting in line at the grocery store let someone have a turn in front of you. You may also think of other family members and send special thinking of you notes. Model with words, “I miss grandma. Let’s send her a picture and note to let her know we are thinking about her.”

Acknowledge random sightings of kindness: Be on the lookout for acts of kindness with siblings or friends. Some things to look for: comforting one another; saying thoughtful things; or taking care of the home such as picking up toys. Acknowledge what you see! For example, if you see your child comfort a friend with a hug or bring them a toy. Respond by saying, “How thoughtful you noticed your sister was sad. That was a very kind thing to do.” Or “You brought your dish to the sink for mommy, what a kind thing to do.”

How does this benefit children...

By connecting words to actions we are helping children to develop a deeper understanding of the concept of kindness. Children are learning how to be caring, responsive community members.

