



COMPASSIONATE AND KIND

What is the quality “Compassionate and Kind”?

Being kind and compassionate are positive qualities that shape relationships between people and help to create caring communities. Kindness is a tendency to feel concern for others, empathy refers more generally to our ability to take the perspective of another person and feel their emotions, and compassion goes one step further. Compassion includes the desire to take actions that will alleviate a person’s suffering, and care for the physical environment as well. Compassion literally means, “to suffer together”. As we enhance our ability to really see and feel what is around us, our ability to experience compassion grows.

What does being compassionate and kind look like?

A child demonstrates compassion and kindness when acting on feelings of concern. This might include spontaneously helping others (e.g. pick up objects that another child has dropped), trying to stop quarrels, saying kind things, helping a person who is sick or hurt, and inviting others to join in a game or activity.

What does it look like when this quality is diminished?

Researchers have demonstrated that empathy can provide a buffer against aggressive and hurtful behaviour. When children do not feel concern for others, they may engage in hurtful behaviours such as name-calling, taking things from others, hitting, pushing, or teasing. They will not spontaneously offer to help when another person is in need of assistance, sick or hurt.

Why is it useful/helpful to have this quality?

Kindness and compassion helps children make and keep friends, understand others’ feelings and behaviours, respond to others’ feelings in an appropriate way, and be emotionally connected with the people around them. The ability to demonstrate compassion and to be kind to others has been found to have numerous health benefits for our mind and body for both those giving and those receiving.

Being compassionate and kind is closely related to empathy. While empathy refers more generally to the ability to take the perspective of and to feel the emotions of another person, compassion includes the desire to take actions that will alleviate another person’s distress.



8 ACTIONS THAT PROMOTE COMPASSION AND KINDNESS

<p>Ask Ask your child how he or she is feeling.</p>	<p>When you ask about your child’s feelings, you are communicating that you care and value his or her emotions.</p>
<p>Talk Talk about your child’s feelings and the feelings of others that are communicated through facial and body expressions.</p>	<p>When your child is sad or happy, you might say “I can tell you are feeling sad because your face and body are telling me.” Discuss the experiences and situations that lead to various types of emotions.</p>
<p>Read Label emotions and describe the situations that lead to those emotions through children’s literature.</p>	<p>Build emotional literacy skills by using many opportunities to point out the emotions of others and give those emotions names. Children’s books provide a wonderful opportunity for this through story and pictures.</p>
<p>Engage Engage young children in activities that help you and others.</p>	<p>Children want to help and contribute. Provide opportunities for your child to help you (in household chores, taking care of a pet or other activities). Developing this early in development will help children see this as a normal part of life.</p>
<p>Demonstrate Demonstrate kindness to yourself and others with forgiveness.</p>	<p>Children often can learn more from our actions than our words. Acknowledge your mistakes with your children (e.g. say “I am sorry”) and then show forgiveness to yourself, others and your child.</p>
<p>Promote Promote gratitude.</p>	<p>Model gratitude and coach your child to experience being grateful. Start by encouraging your child to think about the emotions behind an action and to give thanks.</p>
<p>Restore Use a positive and restorative approach to discipline and model empathy when your child has done something wrong.</p>	<p>When a mistake has been made, use the opportunity to develop skills in restorative practice. With empathy for and with your child, consider the other person’s perspective and feelings, what could have been done instead and ways to repair any harm done.</p>
<p>“...you are...” Help you child develop a caring identity.</p>	<p>When your child is engaged activities that are caring and kind, you should recognize that behavior as part his or her identity – “you are such a kind and caring child because you did [the behavior that demonstrated kindness and caring.]”</p>

