

Introduction to Cultivating Kindness in Families

Welcome to the Cultivating Kindness in Families Program. Kindness is one of the most potent values for the growth of individuals and families.

What is Kindness?

Kindness is love in action. Because we are connected, we are attentive to the people around us, showing compassion and empathy through kind words and actions. Being generous and considerate to ourselves and others can make a big difference in our lives. Kindness must be practiced towards ourselves, people, animals, and the environment.

Why kindness?

Kind families flourish! Kindness fosters healthy connections and emotional well-being, reducing stress and increasing happiness for both the giver and receiver. Acts of kindness can improve physical health. In social contexts, kindness strengthens relationships, promotes a sense of belonging, and creates a positive and supportive environment. Additionally, practicing kindness can enhance empathy and compassion, leading to greater understanding and care for others. Overall, kindness contributes to a more connected, healthy, and harmonious world.

Cultivating Kindness

Kindness is always available. Like with WiFi, we can connect with kindness at any time. To cultivate Kindness:

- 1 We should recognize the signs of kindness in ourselves and our kids:
 "Catch them Kind!" and celebrate it.
- 2 Find ways to nurture kindness as a family and in our everyday lives.
- 3 Model kindness in action for our kids to see and experience.

As parents, we should embody kindness and presence *when facilitating the process* so that the child can *be flexible* as it unfolds. If an emotion or issue surfaces, use it as a teachable moment and change the process accordingly.

Keep it light and fun!

The program consists of **six family “TeamTalks”** that are about 15 minutes each.

1. **Connect to Kindness**
2. **Attend Kindly**
3. **Feeling Kind**
4. **Give Kindly**
5. **Act Kindly**
6. **Commit to Kindness**

Each TeamTalk follows the following format:

- [Lighting the Kind Candle](#) (Celebrating kindness already present in each one and the family)
- [Check-in](#) (Practice kind questioning and attentive listening)
- [Game/Fun Experience](#) (Experience the value, or even the lack of it)
- [Kindness Cultivation Practice](#) (Nurture and embody the value)
- [Spirit of Kindness Quote](#) (Grounding in spirituality)
- [Kindness Calendar Poster](#) (Re-Mind-ing and Celebrating Kindness every day)
- [Kind Candle Extinguish](#) (Learn to take care with endings)
- [More optional resources](#) for daily life, stories, and links

The Kindness Calendar can help instill these values. From the age of 20, Benjamin Franklin kept a notebook in which he recorded his adherence to 13 personal virtues. Each night, Franklin recorded his progress in each area. We can follow Franklin's habit-tracking lead by using a simple kindness calendar to “re-mind” ourselves and embody the chosen values. It will help kids recognize kindness in their own and their parents' acts. Consider having a *Kindness Cookie Jar* to celebrate each session.

Outcomes for the First session:

- Introducing the concept of kindness
- We share our intention to cultivate kindness in our family
- Experience how kindness and lack of kindness feel, as well as connectedness and disconnectedness, openness and closedness, inclusion and exclusion.
- We affirm that everyone in our family is already kind and can grow in kindness.
- We cultivate kindness together with a practice
- Our family commits to kindness
- We have fun as a family

FAMILY TEAMTALK 1: CONNECT TO KINDNESS

Light a Candle

One of the kids can light a candle to mark the beginning of a special celebration of kindness. Mention that we celebrate the kindness already present in each of us and in our families. Like a candle brings light and warmth, so does kindness.

Check-in

Each one gets an opportunity to say how they are doing. Age-dependent, asking about news, highlights, and challenges. Try just listening without fixing.

Introduce the concept of Kindness

Our family is a kind family, and we want to be even more kind! When families are kind, everyone in the family can be happier and flourish like a healthy flower. Kindness is being connected and showing it. It's like holding hands.

Reach out and hold a child's hands with a smile and honest warmth, explaining the feeling of connection. Also, the experience of loss of connection.

The Hugging Game:

Let's play a fun hugging game!

Step 1: Bumper Car Hugs

- Have everyone stand close to each other.
- Cross the arms in front of your chest.
- Try giving each other a hug with your arms crossed. Keep on trying!
- Notice how it feels. Does it feel like a real hug or more like bumper cars?

Step 2: One of Us Opens Up

- Now, one person opens their arms wide for a hug while everyone else keeps their arms crossed.
- Hug each other again.
- Pay attention to how it feels in your body. Is it different from before?

Step 3: More Open Up

- Another person opens their arms wide while the rest keep theirs crossed.
- Hug each other again and notice the feeling.
- Keep repeating this until everyone's arms are open wide and hugging.
- End with a big Group Hug!

Step 4: Age-Dependent Discussion Inquiry After the Exercise

For Younger Kids:

- How did it feel with the arms crossed and the others could not hug you? Was it more like bumping into each other, like bumper cars?
- How does it feel when your arms are open, and you can connect and hug everyone?
- How do we want to be as a family? Like bumper cars or like a group hug?

For Older Kids and Adults:

- How did it feel with the arms were crossed? Did it feel like you were bumping into each other?
- How does it feel when only some members of the family have their arms open, and others do not?
- How does it feel when your arms are open, and you can truly connect?

When we live with kindness, we live with our hearts open and connect with each other. Now, we will cultivate kindness so that we can connect more with open hearts!

Cultivate Kindness: Lovingkindness Practice

We are going to do a Lovingkindness Practice, wishing each other well with accompanying movements. When we do this, kindness flows out of our hearts and fills our house or apartment. We can all flourish in kindness!

Wishing our family well:

Let's say it together:

- ***"May we be kind*** (place your hands on your heart) – Say it with a kind voice.
- ***May we be open*** (open your hands to the sides) – Say it with a long "oooo."
- ***May we be happy*** (raise your hands to the sky) – Shout it with a happy voice.
- ***May we be grateful*** (put your hands in a prayer position) – In a peaceful voice.

For Daddy/Mommy/Caretaker:

Now let's wish Daddy/Mommy/Caretaker well.

- ***May be kind*** (hands on the heart) – Say it with a kind voice.
- ***May be open*** (hands open to the sides) – Say it with a long "oooo."
- ***May be happy*** (hands up in the sky) – Shout it with a happy voice.
- ***May be grateful*** (hands in prayer) – In a peaceful voice.

For Each Child:

It's your turn now! You can use "I" instead of your name if you want to.

- **May (child's name) be kind** (hands on the heart) – Say it with a kind voice.
- **May (child's name) be open** (hands open to the sides) – Say it with a long "oooo."
- **May (child's name) be happy** (hands up in the sky) – Shout it with a happy voice.
- **May (child's name) be grateful** (hands in prayer) – In a peaceful voice.

Encourage everyone to participate and enjoy the practice together, creating a loving and connected family moment. Then, consider reflecting on how this practice was for each person.

The Spirit of Kindness

Henry James: *"Three things in human life are important: the first is to be kind; the second is to be kind; and the third is to be kind."*

Colossians 3:12 (NIV): *"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience."*

Kindness Calendar

To remind ourselves about the theme, put a poster on the refrigerator or another prominent place.

On the poster, you will find a calendar to recognize acts of kindness. Make it a habit to acknowledge and celebrate acts of kindness. Mark acts of kindness with a sticker or pencil. Motive the children to be attentive to acts of kindness in siblings and parents as well!

At the next TeamTalk, we will celebrate these moments with the family during the week to reinforce the importance of kindness and inspire others to follow suit. How about a Kindness Cookie Jar to celebrate all the kindness acts when we have the next TeamTalk?

Who will help put up the poster? (If they offer help, add the first star/note to the calendar!) The poster is at the end of the document.

Someone blows out the candle because we take care with endings!



1 Connect to Kindness



Names

✓

✓

✓



Names

✓

✓

✓

