

Lesson 9

The Practice of Kindness

TEACHER PREPARATION

KEY CONCEPTS

Teaching students to be kind nurtures their well-being and strengthens their relationships with others.

Kindness improves health and decreases stress, reduces depression and bullying.

Being kind makes people feel good and improves their outlook on life.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. understand the value and benefits of showing kindness to others.
2. identify acts of kindness displayed by others.
3. practice acts of kindness.

KEY TERMS

Kindness: a good or considerate action shown by one person to another.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Studies have shown we feel better about ourselves when we practice acts of kindness. For children, it nurtures their well-being and increases their positive connections with peers. When children learn to be kind, they benefit developmentally. Kindness is learned by experience. It is like a muscle that must be put to use to become strong. You need to be strategic in planning lessons where students can identify kindness. As teachers, we must also provide our students with opportunities to practice kindness.

MATERIALS/PREPARATION

1. You will need paper, pencil, markers, colored pencils or crayons and a large jar or box for the Kindness Jar in **Discovering the Lesson**.
2. In **Going Deeper**, you will need a heavy object and five small thank you gifts (piece of candy, toy, handwritten certificate, etc.)

LESSON

BEGINNING THE LESSON

[The goal of this lesson is to have your students learn what kindness means and how to identify kindness in people’s lives. Lead students in a discussion of the definition of kindness. Have students give examples of kindness.]

[Say to the students:] **When we left Hector, Dugan and Trish, they had learned a special lesson about how to be thankful for what they have. It seems like the Map of Wonders continues to teach the children important lessons about life! Let’s see what happens when Hector is asked a confusing question by the Librarian.**

READINESS (5 minutes)

[Read to the students:] **Chapter 9 - Inside Out versus Outside In**

The three students were sitting with their elbows on the table and their chins in their hands. They each had one of those blank stares that sees without really seeing. A small storm, with occasional flashes of lightning, was moving across one region of the map close enough to be observed but far enough away not to be cared about.

“Hector, would you say you are an ‘inside out’ sort of person,” asked the Librarian, “or an ‘outside in’ sort of person?”

“I haven’t got the slightest idea what you’re talking about,” replied Hector.

“Are you motivated primarily by the things going on inside you, like your emotions or thoughts or by the things going on around you, like the weather or winning some game?” clarified the Librarian.

“Oh, I think I get it,” interrupted Trish. “Say, I’m sad. If I decide to go for a walk to feel better, because I love the outdoors, that would be letting the outside world help me not to feel sad. But if I simply told myself to stop feeling sad by thinking about something happy, that would be my inside world trying to help me.”

“Don’t you think people are both?” offered Hector.

“I’m sure you are right,” encouraged the Librarian. “But when someone needs encouragement or extra help, it is important to know if the problem is mostly on the outside or on the inside.”

“You lost me,” said Hector.

“The question is this, ‘If I want to help someone, do I help them on the outside or on the inside?’” said the Librarian.

“I don’t know,” said Hector. “You tell me.”

“Oh, it’s not mine to tell,” said the Librarian.

“I wonder if the Map of Wonders might be of help?” mused Trish. “Why don’t you ask it for help?”

“Okay,” mumbled Hector. “O mighty Map of Wonders!” intoned Hector. “What does it mean to help someone on the outside or on the inside?” Hector was using an overly dramatic voice to mask his own discomfort at having to repeatedly handle a question he didn’t know the answer to.

In response to his question, a bell sounded and a light fell on a wooden lectern several feet away from where they were.

A single book, open in the middle, lay on top of the stand. Hector walked over to the book.

“It’s called the *Book of Kindness and Compassion*,” he reported to the others. Hector touched the center pages and the book automatically opened to a page titled, “What I Really Need.”

“What does it say?” asked Dugan.

When I was hungry, you gave me something to eat.

When I was sad, you visited me.

When I was angry, you asked why, instead of ignoring me.

The words Hector read seemed to hang in the air, wrapped in a comforting silence. No one wanted to break the moment and no one could remember how long it was before anyone said a word — but it seemed like a very long time.

“Whoever the *Book of Kindness and Compassion* is talking about sure seems to know how to get to the heart of the problem,” whispered Dugan. “Whether it is on the inside or outside.”

“I’d like to know someone like that,” added Hector.

EXPLORE (10 minutes)

[Say to the students:] **Are you an “inside out” sort of person or an “outside in” sort of person? Let’s think about it for a few minutes. Can you give some examples to help you know what kind of person you are? Why does it matter what kind of persons we are? How can that help us develop as**

friends and neighbors? *[You should hear answers like “It would help us understand each other better” and “We would know how to make each other feel better.”]* **Hector, Dugan and Trish were learning kindness makes a difference in how we treat each other and meet each other’s needs.**

*[Say to the students:] I will read these short stories to you. [You may choose to have the **older elementary students** read the stories out loud.]*

I want you to listen very closely to see if you can find who is being kind and what they did.

For Younger Elementary Students

[Read the following scenarios.]

Scenario 1: It was lunchtime. Lucy discovered she forgot her lunch. Sally had a sandwich, so she gave half of it to Lucy.

Scenario 2: John was walking down the street when he saw an old woman walking toward him. When they were close to each other, John smiled at her.

Scenario 3: Lydia’s mom was carrying groceries into the house when the bag broke sending boxes, cans and food everywhere. Lydia ran to help her mother pick them up.

Scenario 4: When the new student came into the classroom, the teacher asked for someone to be his friend for the day and show him around. Thomas immediately raised his hand.

[Say to the students:] You easily realized who was being kind in each story. Is being kind hard to do? Why do you think we sometimes have a hard time being kind to others? How could we do better?

For Older Elementary Students

[Read the following scenarios.]

Scenario 1: The teacher asked her students to take out paper for a math assignment. Samuel opened his binder and found he had no paper left. Matthew noticed the troubled look on Samuel’s face so he gave him one of his papers.

Scenario 2: Jane noticed her friend was crying because she had broken the necklace her grandmother had given to her. Jane sat down next to her friend and gave her a hug.

Scenario 3: Manny was out on the playground when he noticed Alex, who was in a wheelchair, struggling to get out of the classroom. It was difficult to hold the door open and push the wheelchair through. Manny ran over to Alex and held the door open so Alex could easily move through the doorway.

Scenario 4: Sarah's aunt was home from the hospital. Sarah made a get-well card and took it to her.

[Say to the students:] You easily realized who was being kind in each story. Is being kind hard to do? Why do you think we sometimes have a hard time being kind to others? How could we do better?

DISCOVER (15 minutes)

[Prepare slips of paper with ideas of people to whom the students can show kindness. Do not use any names, just use words such as a sick friend, a new student at school, your parent, grandparent, sister or brother, teacher and people with disabilities. You may want to add other examples particular to your culture and community. Have different students read the ideas out loud. Ask the class for examples of how they might show kindness to the person.]

For Younger Elementary Students

Activity 1: *[Take a sheet of paper and show the students how to fold it so there are eight boxes (see directions below). Have your students think about the acts of kindness discussed earlier. Tell them every time they perform an act of kindness (for example, picking up someone else's trash, helping a small child or older person safely cross the road, helping to carry someone's groceries, etc.), they get to write or draw the kind act in one of the boxes on their paper. They can choose to do some of the acts of kindness from the responses discussed earlier or think of one of their own. Each time they perform an act of kindness and put it on their paper, they can put a smiley face over that square. When the paper is filled with smiley faces, the student can earn a reward. You may decide on the reward.]*

[Say to the students:]

- Take your piece of paper and fold it in half from top to bottom. Make a firm crease on the fold.
- Now, fold the paper in half from side to side and make a firm crease again.
- Fold the paper in half one more time from top to bottom and make a firm crease again.
- When you open it up, you should have eight rectangles.

During this week, every time you do an act of kindness for someone, you are to write or draw about it in one of the boxes. If you need some ideas, think about some of the ideas we discussed earlier about how to show kindness. Once you put your act of kindness in a rectangle, you may draw a smiley face over the box. When you have filled up your paper with smiley faces, please share it with me.

Activity 2: Kindness Jar *[When you and your students see an act of kindness done by another student in the class, write it on a slip of paper with the student's name and place it in the Kindness Jar. Each week (or each day depending on the age of the child) draw a slip of paper out of the jar. The student whose name appears on the paper is granted a privilege for the day.]*



For Older Elementary Students

Activity 1: *[Divide the classroom into small groups. Each group will plan a skit showing an act of kindness. Encourage the groups to develop creative dialogue and use props.]*

Activity 2: Kindness Jar *[When you and your students see an act of kindness done by another student in the class, write it on a slip of paper with the student's name and place it in the Kindness Jar. At the end of the week, draw a slip of paper out of the jar. The student whose name appears on the paper receives a privilege. This activity can be carried on throughout the year as motivation for acts of kindness or may be used from time to time as the class needs to be reminded and encouraged to be kind.]*

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APPLY (15 minutes)

For Younger Elementary Students

[Plan a class kindness project you can do around the school. Let students make suggestions and write them on the board. Examples might include: pick up trash around the school, clean the top of each desk and table in the class with cleaner, write notes to some of their special teachers or administrators, etc.]

For Older Elementary Students

[Plan a class kindness activity. Your class can “adopt” a younger classroom of students to be their “buddies.” Students can spend time each week reading to their “buddies,” teaching them a playground game or helping them with schoolwork. Older students can wash their classroom windows or write letters to elderly people in their community. Let your students brainstorm ideas for this project.]

SHARE (30 minutes)

For Younger Elementary Students

[Direct students in carrying out their plan for the class kindness project.]

For Older Elementary Students

Activity 1: *[Help students perform their skits from the **Discover** section for the other class members or their younger “Buddy Class.”]*

Activity 2: *[Direct students in carrying out their plan for the class kindness project.]*

ENDING THE LESSON

[Teaching students how to live a life where their dreams and goals can happen requires teaching the concept of kindness. Friendships, families, classrooms and communities function better when people know and practice kindness. Everyone must realize a successful society is one regularly exhibiting the character of kindness.]

GOING DEEPER (optional)

[This segment includes a verse from the Gospel of Matthew, the first book in the Christian New Testament. The verse quotes Jesus, whom Christians believe is the Son of God and God in human form. Note: in the passage

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below from Matthew, Jesus is saying to those who've died, "Whatever you did for others, you did for me." Since Jesus said he was God, he meant anything done for him is done for God. Depending on the age of your students, you may want to teach the simpler version given below or explain the background of Christian belief.]

[Choose an object in your classroom, possibly a table or your desk — an object difficult for one student to move. You may need to bring a heavy object in from elsewhere. Have your 'thank you gifts' ready. They can be candy, a small toy or even a hand-written certificate identifying the student as a "Teacher's Helper." Make sure you have at least five gifts, although you may not need them all.]

*[Say to the students:] **As we begin, I need a volunteer to help move something.** [Choose a student you are sure could not move the object alone.]*

*[Say to the volunteer:] **Would you please move this from here to there?** [Let the volunteer try. As the volunteer is having difficulty, say to the class:] **This looks like it's too heavy for one person. Would any of you be willing to help him (or her)? If so, please raise your hand.** [Do not let more than four students come to help.]*

*[When the students have successfully moved the object, say to them:] **Thank you for your help. I have a thank you gift for each of you, including our first volunteer.***

*[Say to the students:] **Who were the last volunteers helping – our original volunteer or me?** [Let one or more students answer, then say to the students:] **Yes, they were helping both of us. They could see our volunteer needed help, but they were also helping me because I'm the one who wanted it moved. With that in mind, let's look at a verse from Matthew, the first book of the New Testament in the Bible. Matthew is one of the four books called the Gospels, which tell about the life of Jesus. Here Jesus teaches about one of the things God says to people after they die.***

God says they helped him when he was hungry and thirsty. When he was a stranger, they took him into their homes. They gave him clothes and

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took care of him when he was sick. Does any of what I just read sound familiar? *[Accept some answers.]*

Yes, it's very much like what Hector read from the *Book of Kindness and Compassion* in our story. Then, the people say to God, "When did we do all these things for you?"

Now, let's look at the verse where God answers them:

"I can guarantee this truth: Whatever you did for one of my brothers or sisters, no matter how unimportant they seemed, you did for me" (*Matthew 25:40, God's Word Translation*).

According to Jesus' teaching, what is God going to say to some of the people who've died and gone to Heaven? *[Let students respond, then add:]* It's a little bit like our game. When some of you came up and helped (name original volunteer), you were also helping me.

Why do you think God might think when we do good things for other people, we are also doing good things for Him? *[Let the students respond, then add:]* The Bible says God made everything, including every person. Therefore, God cares deeply about how we treat other people. When we are kind or help others, we are actually helping God Himself.

PARENT-TEACHER CONNECTION

In our lesson, we discussed how important it is to be kind to others. When children learn to be kind, it strengthens their character and teaches them to care about others. Enjoy modeling and providing opportunities for your child to be kind within your family and outside of your family.

Questions you might ask your child:

1. Can you tell me the story your teacher read? Do you remember what *The Book of Kindness and Compassion* said? (When I was hungry, you gave me something to eat. When I was sad, you visited me. When I was angry, you asked yourself why, instead of ignoring me.)
2. Tell your child about a time you saw him or her be kind, then ask, “As a family, how do you think we can all be kinder to each other?” (Accept whatever your child suggests and add an idea of your own.)
3. Can you think of one thing we all can put into practice today? (Look for opportunities to notice when your child is kind to someone.)
4. Do you sometimes wonder how I learned about kindness? (Describe a time when you showed kindness to someone. What was the result and how did you feel?)
5. Can you think about a family project we could do together to demonstrate kindness to someone in our neighborhood? (If you don’t get any ideas from your child, help guide them with a suggestion of your own. It may generate an idea in your child and that might be worth pursuing together.)

