

7 tips for teaching kids empathy and compassion

1. Model caring for others

Show concern for people outside your circle, as well as your family, friends, and associates. Give the letter carrier a bottle of water on a hot day. Join the street musician in a song you know. Talk to strangers in the grocery store line. Notice how you talk about other people and make sure it's respectful and kind.

2. Model good listening skills

Let your body language and facial expressions convey that you are listening by nodding and offering plenty of uh-huhs. Respond to what people say. **Don't** formulate your response while someone else is still talking. And don't interrupt.

3. Be forgiving

Remember, forgiveness is not about the other person. It's about how you act and feel. Let your child see you being the bigger person. **Don't** hold grudges, seek revenge, be mean or unkind, or give "the silent treatment" to loved ones.

4. Challenge prejudices and stereotypes

Don't be afraid to talk to your kid about race, inequality, and discrimination. If you see incidents of prejudices or stereotyping, don't let them pass without comment.

5. Help them learn to recognize, express, and manage their feelings

Help your child learn to identify other people's feelings when reading books or watching movies or TV shows. When your child is struggling, don't ignore or disregard her feelings with phrases like, "Stop. I don't want to hear it" or "Big girls don't cry."

6. Encourage responsibility

Let your children participate in the home. Have family meetings where you listen to their concerns and get their opinion. Give them chores and teach them life skills. Let them join you in your community and volunteer activities.

7. Immerse them in literature and art

Surround your child with diverse books and music from other cultures. Pictures, books, and music allow kids to vicariously experience another person's world. Plus, they provide easy prompts for further discussion.