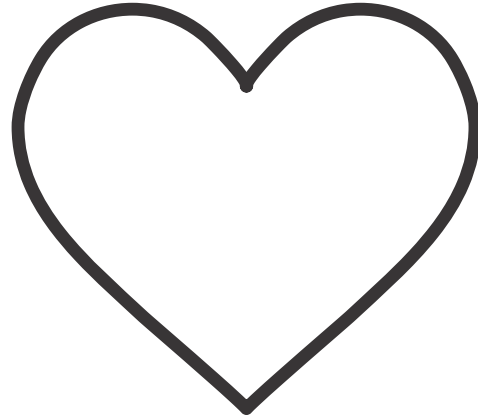


7 TIPS FOR RAISING CARING KIDS

The seeds of empathy, caring, and compassion are present from early in life, but children need adults to help them at every stage to nurture these seeds into full development.

Below are guideposts for raising caring, respectful, and ethical children along with tips for putting them into action. Visit bit.ly/MCC7caringtips for more tips and ideas.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

1

Work to develop caring, loving relationships with your kids.

Try this:

- Plan regular, emotionally intimate time with your child.
- Make time for meaningful conversation. Whenever you have time with your child, take turns asking each other questions that bring out your thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Ask questions such as: “What was the best part of your day? The hardest part?”

2

Be a strong moral role model and mentor.

Try this:

- Regularly engage in community service or model ways of contributing to a community.
- Practice honesty and humility. For example, apologize to your child if you make a mistake.
- Check in with people you trust when you’re finding it hard to be caring or to model other ethical qualities.
- Take care of yourself.

“...we as parents ought to be willing to ask ourselves the hard, fundamental questions about who we want to be and what we want to model for our children.”

—Rick Weissbourd, Faculty Director of Making Caring Common

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3

Make caring for others a priority and set high ethical expectations.

Try this:

- Send clear and daily messages about the importance of caring. For example, instead of saying to your child, “The most important thing is that you’re happy,” you might say, “The most important thing is that you’re *kind* and that you’re happy.”
- Prioritize caring when you talk with other key adults in your child's life. Ask teachers if your child is a good community member before asking about grades.
- Before letting your child quit a team or a band—or a friendship—ask them to consider their obligations to others and encourage them to work out problems.

4

Provide opportunities for children to practice caring and gratitude.

Try this:

- Expect children to routinely help with household chores and siblings. Caring is like a muscle, and it develops through practice.
- Make caring and justice a focus of your conversations.
- Make expressing gratitude a daily ritual at dinnertime, bedtime, or in the car.

5

Expand your child's circle of concern.

Try this:

- Encourage your child to consider the feelings of those who may be vulnerable, such as a new child at school, and the perspectives of people who may not be on their radar, such as the school custodian.
- Use newspaper or TV stories to *zoom out* and start conversations about other people's hardships and challenges.
- Help your child *zoom in* by emphasizing the importance of really listening to others, especially those people who may seem unfamiliar or different.

6

Promote children's ability to be ethical thinkers and positive change-makers in their communities.

Try this:

- Encourage your child to take action against problems that affect them, such as cyberbullying or an unsafe street corner.
- Provide opportunities for your child to join causes that interest them.
- Encourage your child not just to “do for” others but to “do with” others, working with diverse groups of students to respond to community problems.
- Think out loud with your child. For example, start a conversation about ethical dilemmas that arise on TV shows.

7

Help children develop self-control and manage feelings effectively.

Try this:

- Help your child identify their difficult feelings, such as frustration, shame, and anger. Encourage them to talk to you about why they're feeling that way.
- Practice three steps to self-control with your child: 1) Stop, 2) Take a deep breath through the nose and exhale through the mouth, and 3) Count to five.
- Practice with your child how to resolve conflicts. For example, consider a conflict your child experienced and role play different ways of responding.
- Set clear limits and boundaries.

Raising caring, respectful, and ethical children has always been hard work but it's something all of us can do. And no work is more important and ultimately more rewarding.