

LESSON FOUR: KIND ACTIONS



KIND ACTIONS

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Follow-up *(As a family discuss the assignment for the lesson Tone of Voice.)*

1. Can anyone remember a time this week when you felt like using an unkind tone of voice, but spoke gently instead?
2. How can we make speaking kindly a habit?

Concept

Kind actions are anything we do to make a person's life easier or happier without expecting a reward. Kind actions show concern and caring. When we show kindness in our family, we're helping one another feel loved. When people feel loved, they can more easily show kindness to others.

Mother Teresa encouraged everyone to be kind when she said, "Spread love wherever you go: first of all in your own house. Give love to your children, to your wife or husband, to a next door neighbor...let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God's kindness; kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile, kindness in your warm greeting."

Kind actions can be very simple--a smile, a pat on the back, helping with a chore, listening with interest when someone needs you, or doing a job that needs to be done without being told. When family members ask themselves the question, "What can I do to make another person's life easier?" or, "What can I do to help someone I love?" there are usually countless answers. Being in a family gives us many opportunities to show kindness every day.

Our kind actions come from our thoughts--the desires we have to be good and loving. At the end of each day we should think, "How closely did my actions today match my good intentions to be kind?" Being aware of our actions will help us improve them day by day, until we become truly kind in thought, word, and deed.

Family Survey Review

Statement #4. **We treat one another the way we like to be treated.**

- Is this true in our family?

- What can we do to live the “Golden Rule?” (Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.) *Suggestions: We can try to understand the other person’s feelings before we speak or act. Also, we can ask ourselves the question, “Would I want them to treat me this way?”*

Story

Several years ago at the U.S.A. Special Olympics in Seattle, Washington, nine contestants assembled at the starting line for the 100 yard dash. Every runner was either physically or mentally disabled. At the sound of the gun they all started out, not exactly in a dash, but each with great excitement to run the race to the finish and win.

Suddenly, one boy stumbled on the asphalt and fell. He lay on the ground and cried. When the other contestants heard the boy crying, they slowed down and stopped. Then all eight of those special young people turned around and went back. One girl with Down’s syndrome bent down and kissed him saying, “This will make it better.” They picked up their fallen competitor, then all nine linked arms and, grinning broadly, they walked together to the finish line.

Everyone in the stadium that day was touched by the compassionate act of kindness they had witnessed. The entire audience unanimously gave the runners a long, enthusiastic standing ovation.

Discussion

1. Do you think each young person wanted to win?
2. When one boy stumbled, what did the runners do?
3. If you were a runner that day, do you think you would have stopped? Why or why not?

Activity

For our activity, let’s each think of a time when someone in our family was kind. The one who begins will explain what kindness was shown. We won’t tell yet who the kind person was. Let the family guess. The one who guesses right is the next one to tell about someone being kind. Each time the person who showed the kindness is to keep quiet. This is an example of how it will work: One person will say, “Someone made a great dinner for the family tonight. Who is it?” Or, “Someone helped me with my homework. Who is it?” If the children are small, Dad may say something like, “Someone ran to the corner to meet me when I got off the bus. Who is it?”

No one gets a second turn until everyone has had one turn. The game can continue as long as everyone wants to play. *(If your family is small, acts of kindness by grandparents and friends can be shared.)*

Assignment

1. Answer these questions:

- If someone in my family is unkind to me, am I unkind to them to get even?
 - Do my actions show that I love my family?
2. Do at least one kind thing for each family member during the coming week. Anonymous acts of kindness are even more special.
 3. If you wish, read the Additional Solution for Success: Giving and Receiving Affection.

ADDITIONAL SOLUTION FOR SUCCESS

GIVING AND RECEIVING AFFECTION

Some years ago, hospitals and orphanages discovered a fascinating phenomenon known as the “Failure to Thrive” syndrome. Babies who were in the hospital for a long time began to lose weight, they were not learning to sit up or crawl, and they didn’t show any interest in what was going on around them. In some cases, they even died. At first authorities were very puzzled by the problem. These babies were being cared for physically in every way that was needed. Doctors came to realize that these babies were not receiving enough affection. Nurses were told to hold the babies often, and to take time from their duties to talk and sing to the babies. Miraculously, the babies began to grow and progress. Today, most hospitals have a rocking chair in the nursery for nurses and volunteers to hold and rock babies regularly.

None of us really outgrow our need for affection. The outward signs may not be as clear as with small babies, but many people “fail to thrive” because of lack of affection. We all have a need to receive affection if we are to become the best that we can be. We also need to give affection freely so others know we care.

People express affection in different ways. Some are more comfortable than others giving and receiving affection. For some it is very natural to give kisses, hugs or pats on the back. For others this can seem awkward. Some people find it easy to speak warmly and affectionately. For others, doing something for someone is their way of showing affection. It should also be remembered that children have different personalities and sometimes prefer different expressions of affection.

Family members need to make an effort to show appropriate affection for each other in a sensitive way that allows all family members to feel comfortable. You can determine appropriate ways to show affection to each family member by asking the following questions:

- When you are feeling upset, what can someone do to show they care about you?
- If you had just received an award, how could someone show they are happy for you?
- When you want to show someone you care, would you be more likely to do

something special for them, praise them, or give them a hug?

Listen to how everyone answers each question, one question at a time. The different ways people express affection is just one of the many differences between us. Differences aren't wrong or bad, they are just differences. One of the greatest ways to show someone we truly care about them is to accept them the way they are. Acceptance is a great source of support to people. It says, "You don't have to change for me. I like you just the way you are."

Ten ways we can show kindness:

1. Speak gently, always being positive and lifting others.
2. Help others with no thought of reward.
2. Overlook mistakes; have great patience with imperfections.
3. Forgive easily and quickly.
4. Put the needs and desires of others before your own.
6. Share the good things in your life freely.
5. Listen patiently.
6. Give of yourself--especially your time.
9. Be polite and courteous.
7. Treat others the way you'd like to be treated.

In addition to showing kindness in the ways listed above, we can sometimes make a special effort to be kind by scheduling acts of kindness individually and as a family. We can set aside a little time on a regular basis--five minutes, fifteen minutes, an hour--whatever we choose, and not let anything interfere. We should treat this time for showing kindness just like any other important scheduled appointment. This time is for doing something thoughtful. For example, we can call someone who would like to hear from us, write a letter, or as a family do an act of service. Anything we do will be showing love and making the world a better place.

Showing kindness in the home:

- demonstrates the care and concern family members feel for one another
- creates a loving atmosphere
- prevents problems

We're all happiest when we feel loved--when we know people care about our feelings and have concern for our well-being. Family members show their love to one another through kind thoughts, kind words, kind tones of voice and kind actions. Where there is kindness, there is an atmosphere of love, and problems that weaken families are often prevented.

Kindness can be thought of as a circle. The kindness circle can be broken either by failure to show it, or by failure to receive it. It is equally important to both show kindness and be able to receive it. Usually we parents are so concerned about teaching children how to give, that we don't help them learn how to receive. Parents need to teach children to be gracious and return kindness with words and expressions of gratitude. For example, thank you notes sent to gift-givers are always appreciated, and often result in desires to give again. Simple smiles and words of appreciation following acts of kindness help keep the "circle of kindness" intact. Russell Lynes said, "The art of acceptance is the art of making someone who has done you a small favor wish that he might have done you a greater one."

Solutions FOR FAMILIES

Part of the **TOTAL LIFE EXCELLENCE** program

You may not believe that your family can generously show kindnesses to one another because perhaps your parents didn't show kindness in your home. This is a challenge. Although you cannot change your past, you do have the power to affect your future; to choose how you think and act. You can choose to begin new traditions of kindness in your home. It will be more difficult than if examples of kindness were part of your heritage, but you can practice kindness in your family and leave a legacy of love for your children and grandchildren.

Kindness is the single most important ingredient in a happy home. Henri Frederic Amiel reminds us of the importance of this great virtue with his words, "Life is short and we have never too much time for gladdening the hearts of those who are traveling the dark journey with us. Oh, be swift to love....make haste to be kind."