



Compassion

COMPASSION is a sympathetic understanding of another person's pain with the desire to relieve it.

Activity 1

Teach your child that showing **COMPASSION** includes understanding another person's feelings and acting to help ease suffering. Read the following scenarios to your child and discuss how he or she would feel if . . .

- 1) Children made fun of a brother or sister for wearing glasses.
- 2) A boy fell off his bike and hurt his arm.
- 3) One of your classmates has a difficult time making friends and is lonely.

Explain that when your child understands others to the point that he or she feels their pain or sadness, and then acts to relieve it, he or she is showing compassion.

Activity 2

Read and discuss the following quote by author Loretta Girzaitis with your child: *"If someone listens, or stretches out a hand, or whispers a kind word of encouragement, or attempts to understand a lonely person, extraordinary things begin to happen."*

Make a list together of specific ways family members can show compassion to others. (Examples include: responding when someone is hurt, helping with homework, visiting someone who is sick, sharing a meal with someone who is hungry, etc.) Choose some of the ideas and follow through to help someone in need. Practice compassion by serving together.

Activity 3

Together with your child, identify different handicaps some people face and imagine how it would feel if he or she was facing those challenges. Discuss what it might be like if your child was not able to walk, see, or hear. Consider helping your child understand the difficulties of a speech impediment with a fun and simple experiment. Put a few pieces of hard candy (such as lifesavers or suckers) in your mouths and keep them in the middle of your tongues while you try to talk with each other. Notice how different some words sound and how much harder it is to understand one another. Encourage your child to be sensitive and compassionate to people who live with disabilities.

Activity 4

Tell your child that the simple act of listening is one way to show compassion. Explain that while your child may be unable to fix another person's problem, he or she will always be able to help by listening. Emphasize important aspects of compassionate listening, such as not judging, not jumping to conclusions, not interrupting, not finishing sentences for others, giving the person your full attention, etc. Have fun sharpening listening skills together by playing a listening game. Without your child seeing, choose a few items, like a spoon, a ball, car keys, etc. Ask your child to close his or her eyes, listen, and try to identify what the object is as you drop the items on the floor one at a time. Encourage your child to look for opportunities to show compassion by listening.

Activity 5

Help your child understand the importance of showing compassion to ease another person's pain, sorrow, or loneliness. Explain that showing compassion can also help people feel valued and appreciated. Brainstorm with your child to identify a family member or friend who could benefit from a note or a plate of cookies and ask your child to write a thoughtful note to express friendship. Examples include: a card for a family member, balloons for a neighbor, cookies for a grandparent, etc. Make a plan to work together to develop a home filled with compassion.