

Children's Conscious Acts of Caring

In this lesson participants record moments of kindness, caring, and compassion through written stories, photography, poetry, songs and/or video and, in so doing, reinforce positive behaviors.

What to Know

Research shows that reinforcing positive behaviors is an effective way to develop these behaviors in children. We recommend that you integrate this activity and others like it into the routines of your classroom as a way of creating a caring classroom culture.

Objectives

Participants will:

1. identify caring behaviors;
2. create a community cultural norm of caring; and,
3. reinforce caring behaviors towards creating a caring classroom culture.

Common Core Standard Alignment

- Anchor Standards for Literacy: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas
 - CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7 - Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
- Anchor Standards for Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing
 - CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.4 - Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
 - CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.6 - Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.
- Anchor Standards for Writing: Range of Writing
 - CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.10 - Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.
- Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration
 - CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1 - Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
 - CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.2 - Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
- Anchor Standards for Language: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas
 - CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.4 - Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Preparation and Materials

- Art supplies: markers, crayons, scissors
- Slips of paper with the name of each child in your classroom

- Soft ball or other way to indicate who is the speaker in a circle
- Cameras, video equipment (optional)
- “Don’t Laugh at Me” song (optional)
- For this lesson, students will be recording and displaying acts of kindness and caring they witness. You can use index cards or construction paper. Or you may decide as a class (or school) to use templates such as your school mascot, a fish (with a hook for “catching”), a smiley face, etc.

Gather Together/Warm-Up/Bell Ringer: Feelings Echo (5 minutes)

Gather students in a circle and explain the game:

“We’re each going to have a turn to finish the sentence, ‘I feel cared for when....’” One person will start with the soft ball and then pass the ball around the circle. If you are not ready to share an idea, you can pass and we’ll come back to you.”

Continue until every student has contributed once.

Explain that today the class will discuss kindness, caring, and friendship. During the next several days they will find examples of it in the classroom and school community.

Main Activity: Conscious Caring (20 Minutes)

Have students work in pairs. Explain that you will be starting with partner A responding to the question and partner B listening. Then partner B will answer the same question and partner A will listen. Have students respond to the following prompts:

- A time when someone was kind and caring to me at school was _____.
- A time when I was kind and caring to someone at school was _____.

Ask for a few volunteers to share their stories with the whole group or, if you have time, have each pair share.

Now have pairs combine into groups of four. Give each group a sheet of paper on which they will explore what kindness “looks like” and “sounds like.” Have the groups brainstorm what they “see” when they witness kindness and, on the opposite side of the page, indicate what they “hear” when they witness kindness. Give the groups no more than 5 minutes per side with a signal of when to switch. (If groups need some help, some examples of what kindness looks like includes smiling faces, drawing a picture for someone, holding a door, etc. Kindness sounds like: saying thank you, giving compliments, laughter, “do you want to play?”)

Have a group reporter share the group’s work with the whole class.

Summarize key points and discuss:

“What, if anything, keeps us from being kind to one another?”

Explain the “Caught Being Kind” activity:

For a period time (several days to a week), students will be roving reporters, “catching” incidents of kindness, cooperation, and caring that happen at school or documenting actions of caring they themselves perform. All children should write and illustrate with

artwork, photos or video about the act of caring they performed or witnessed. To ensure full participation, each student can be assigned a certain number of examples to record.

Set a time period for the activity and then schedule a gallery showing, inviting other classrooms to join you. (This activity also works well as a family homework assignment.)

Integrated Arts (10 Minutes)

Art: Break students into groups of four to do cooperative art activities. Each group will create *one* piece of art that addresses one of the following questions (they can choose): If kindness were an animal, what animal would it be (make one up)? If kindness were a superhero, what superhero would he/she be (make one up)? What does kindness look like?

Closing: Electric Hand Squeeze (5 Minutes)

Close the session by having all the students stand in a circle holding hands. Start the "electricity" by squeezing the hand of the person on your right. That person passes it on by squeezing the hand on her right. After the pulse has gone through the circle, go around a second time with a more difficult pattern (for example, do two short squeezes, or a long one following by a short one). Kindness—like the "electricity" in this activity—is infectious. So pass it on! (Have students wash their hands before and after this activity to spread only kindness, not germs.)

Grade Level Modifications

K-1

For the Main Activity, after students have answered the first two questions, have pairs return to the group. As a whole group, complete a T-chart titled *Kindness*. Label one side of the T, "Looks Like" and the other side "Sounds Like." Have students share ideas for what kindness looks and sounds like in action.

Grade 6-12 and Adults

This activity can be done as is for grades 6-12 and adults.

Curricular Connections

K-5 Art: For a period time (several days to a week), students will be roving reporters, "catching" incidents of kindness, cooperation, and caring that happen at school or documenting actions of caring they themselves perform. All children should write and illustrate with artwork, photos or video about the act of caring they performed or witnessed. To ensure full participation, each student can be assigned a certain number of examples to record.

K-5 Literacy: [*Swimmy*](#) by Leo Lionni provides a great launching point for discussion about teamwork and cooperation vs. competition.

Build students' vocabulary by creating a glossary with definitions for new words such as caring, compassion, kindness, etc., as they come up in the program.

[*Ordinary Mary's Extraordinary Deed*](#) by Emily Pearson illustrates the way one act of kindness can have an enormous impact.

[*The Lion and the Mouse*](#) by Jerry Pinkney is an adaptation of Aesop's fable that demonstrates no one is too small to repay a kindness.

K-5 Math: Acts of kindness and caring can be tallied or graphed each day for one or two weeks.

K-12 Media Literacy: What do superheroes teach us about cooperation vs. competition? What messages do they send about using force rather than peaceful cooperation to get what we need? Challenge students to create a superhero who draws power from his ability to cooperate or show caring so well.

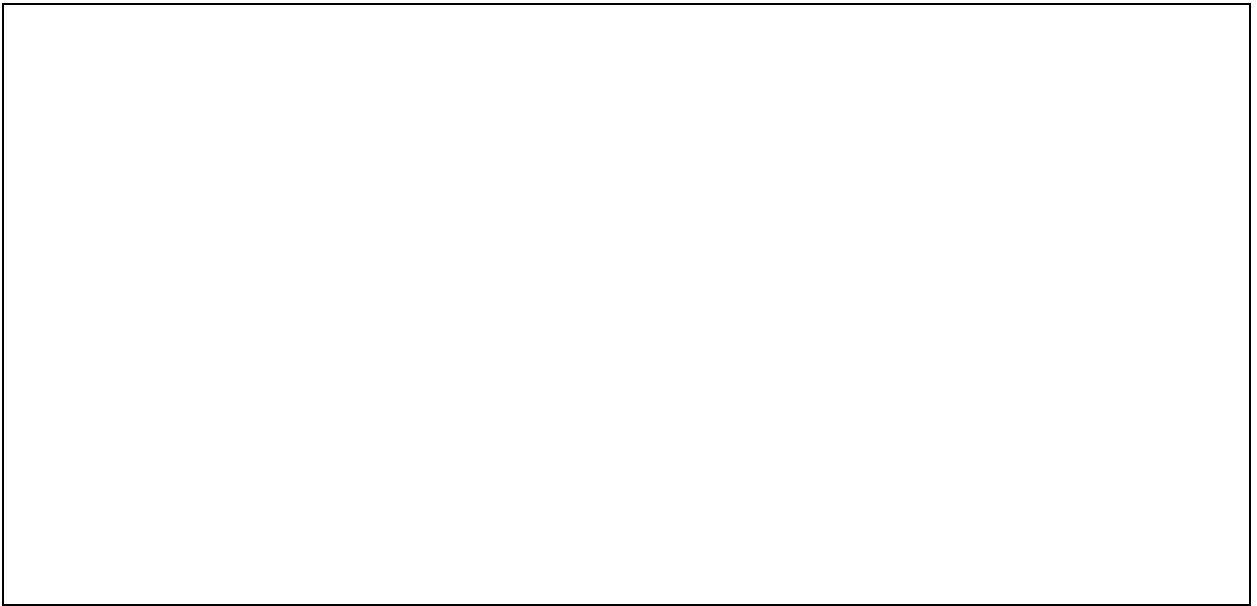
6-12 Social Studies/History: Who were the allies of targeted groups during major historical movements and what impact did their caring have? (i.e. the Underground Railroad during slavery or those who helped Jews escape during WWII, etc.) Have students create fictionalized versions of a day in the life of one of these allies towards better understanding their motivation, risks, and rewards.

6-12 English/Literacy: Explore themes of culture and how it is created through reading the [Lord of the Flies](#), which features a group of boys stuck on an island who try to govern themselves with disastrous results. Create alternate plot lines for how the novel could have been had caring been a central value.

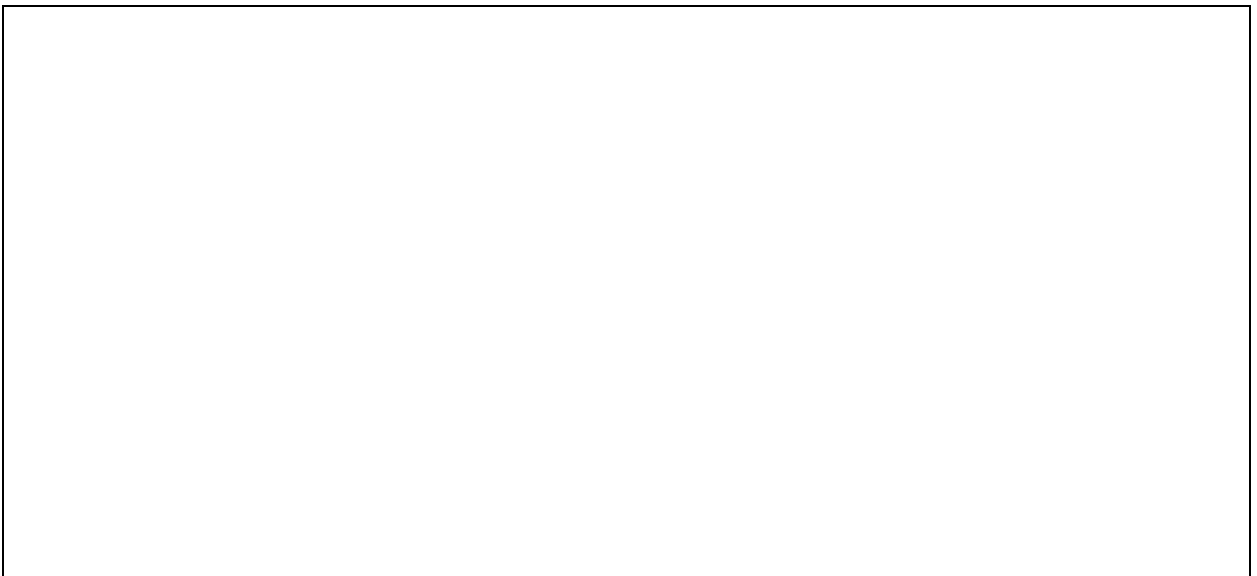
6-12 Social Studies/Civics: Have students map conscious acts of caring in your community. What good deeds have resulted in educational programs, scholarships, and resources for the disadvantaged in your area?

Kindness

Looks Like

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for students to describe what kindness looks like.

Sounds Like

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for students to describe what kindness sounds like.