

How to Show Kindness in Your Home

By Paula Fellingham

“Kindness is the single most important ingredient in a happy home.” This is the conclusion from a family study completed by researchers Dr. Ivan F. Beutler, Dr. Thomas R. Lee and Dr. Wesley R. Burr. Kindness is a key to individual happiness and family peace. Dr. Albert Schweitzer, a well-known humanitarian once said, “Kindness can accomplish much. As the sun makes ice melt, kindness causes misunderstanding, mistrust and hostility to evaporate.”

As I have met with hundreds of families, spoken to numerous groups about family issues, and critically observed families for decades, I have come to know that kindness is indeed a foundational part of every happy home. Without kindness, the money and the time we give our families is meaningless. Where there is no kindness, all attempts at family success are useless.

Kindness can be shown in many ways, every day. We have countless opportunities to show kindness in the home. I’ve heard it said in different ways but the message is always the same: little, frequent acts of kindness are appreciated far more than large material gifts given without affection. Simple words and deeds that show caring and concern for one another should be a part of the fabric of family life. When we treat one another as we would like to be treated, showing kindness and love, our acts of goodness will be noticed and imitated, creating *habits of kindness and traditions of family love*.

Some ways we can show kindness:

1. Speak gently, always being positive and lifting others.
2. Help people with no thought of reward.
3. Overlook others’ mistakes; have great patience with imperfections.
4. Forgive easily and quickly.
5. Put the needs and desires of others before your own.
6. Share the good things in your life freely.
7. Be genuinely interested in the welfare of others.
8. Give of yourself--especially your time.
9. Be polite and courteous.
10. Share another’s burden.
11. Listen patiently.
12. Set a good example.
13. Resist the urge to talk about others unkindly.
14. Treat others the way you’d like to be treated.
15. Be fair and honest at all times.
16. Love all people unconditionally.

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 the failure to show it, or by the 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."

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."

Kindness is the single most important ingredient in a happy home. This is the conclusion from a family study completed by researchers Dr. Ivan F. Beutler, Dr. Thomas R. Lee and Dr. Wesley R. Burr. Kindness has been chosen as the first and most important "family solution" because it is a key to individual happiness and family peace.

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Paula Fellingham is an internationally-acclaimed speaker, the author of 5 books, and the mother of 7 children. She has spoken at the United Nations and at conferences across the globe for over 30 years. Paula is a former radio talk show host and newspaper columnist. She is currently the CEO of The Women's Information Network, www.TheWINonline.com. Paula's mission is to strengthen women and families worldwide.