

Compassion: Parents The April Character Trait of the Month

Most parents want to raise **compassionate** children. Compassion is the ability to understand and care about the feelings and needs of others. When we show compassion, we are showing kindness and empathy towards those around us.

Being compassionate means putting ourselves in someone else's shoes and imagining what they may be feeling. It is about being aware of their struggles and offering them help and support. Compassion helps us to build strong relationships with others, as it allows us to connect with them on a deeper level.

Children's capacity for compassion will naturally increase with age, but there are ways that parents can foster this quality. Start by modeling compassionate behavior for your children. With younger children, you may want to verbalize your thought process, for example: "I see that man has a sign saying he is hungry and needs money. I don't like it when I feel hungry. It makes me sad to see him suffering. I am going to give him a few dollars for food." Then, when you see your child exhibiting compassionate behavior toward others, praise them!

Teach your children that there are many different ways to express compassion. You can show empathy by giving someone money, but you can also help others by saying encouraging things. Different situations may require different expressions of compassion. Some people prefer a hug. Others might respond better to a child's kind words. If you are concerned about someone and don't know how to help, you can always ask them what they need.

Another way to boost your child's capacity for compassion is to teach them to have compassion for themselves. If your child can forgive herself when she makes a mistake, it will be easier for her to extend that same kindness to others. If you'd like to learn more about Dr. Kristin Neff's work on self-compassion, go to self-compassion.org

Teachers (including homeschooling parents) can incorporate activities and exercises to promote compassion, such as playing team-building games, establishing an "acts of kindness" jar, reading and writing stories about helpers, role-playing scenarios requiring compassion, and brainstorming solutions for imaginary crisis scenarios.

By teaching and promoting compassion in children, we can help create a more kind and empathetic society.

**This article was written and published by Kelly Miller, BA, CAPP and PositivePsychology.com. It has been shortened from its original form. To be linked to the original article, please click [here](#).*