

# Want To Raise Kind Kids? Harvard Says These 5 Techniques Will Help You Do That

by Rajie Kabli.



The Making Caring Common Project, done at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, came up with some interesting findings that seem even more relevant given that World Random Act of Kindness Day is just around the corner on November 13th. According to the study, a large majority of youth across a wide spectrum of races, cultures, and classes appear to value aspects of personal success—achievement and happiness—over concern for others.

It's interesting because if you ask most parents how important instilling kindness into their kids is, they will rank it pretty high on the list. However, the findings say differently. From 2013-2014, researchers spoke with 10,000 kids in either middle and high school in the United States. Nearly 80% said that their parents taught them that personal happiness and high achievement were more important than caring for other people. Youth were also 3 times more likely to agree than disagree with this statement:

“My parents are prouder if I get good grades in my classes than if I'm a caring community member in class and school.”

Is this really the message we want to send our youth? Parents are usually concerned with their children's moral state, so perhaps a hard look at the messages we send to children and youth on a daily bases would be a good idea. The survey shows that although caring and fairness are subordinated to achievement and happiness, they are still important to youth and their parents. Great!

In response to these findings, they have come up with 5 suggestions to help shift the balance towards kindness and caring for others in children and youth:

### **1. Give Them Opportunities To Practice**

Kids aren't born good or bad, and they learn kindness just like they would learn anything else, such as a sport or an instrument. Daily repetition of acts of caring will help grow the capacity for them to want to help others. Simple things like watering the plants or even helping a friend with homework go a long way. With guidance from adults and practice, young people can also develop the skills and courage to know when and how to intervene in situations when they and others are in trouble.

### **2. Learning Two Important Skills**

Being able to zoom in and out helps build a 'wider circle of concern'. Being able to dial in and listen closely and attentively to individuals while also taking in the big picture, capturing multiple perspectives, helps children and youth with understanding the full range of the human experience and putting it into context

### **3. They Need Role Models**

This doesn't mean being the 'perfect parent' or having all of the answers, but understanding our own shortcomings and being honest and transparent about them to our kids can work wonders in connecting our values to their way of understanding the world. Lead by example, and if we continue to practice zooming in and out so will they.

### **4. Help Children Manage Destructive Feelings**

Often the ability to care for others is overshadowed by feelings of jealousy, anger, shame, or other negative feelings. We need to teach children that all feelings are okay, but there are other ways of dealing with them. Children need our help learning to cope with these feelings in productive ways. Children are "moral philosophers," the researchers write. "When adults spark children's thinking with ethical questions they put issues of injustice on children's radar and help children learn how to weigh their various responsibilities to others and themselves."

### **5. Adults, Stop Passing The Buck**

Researchers mentioned that parents worry too much about their children's moral state and what kind of member in society they will be. But, it's hard to find adults who openly admit that they may be part of the problem. Adults need to interrogate the messages they're sending, and ask themselves: what values am I really instilling? It's time to take responsibility.

Source; <http://www.collective-evolution.com/2015/11/06/want-to-raise-kind-kids-harvard-says-these-5-techniques-will-help-you-do-that/>