

# Caring Character Connection

Caring people love, help, give and are kind. They are caretakers of people, pets, plants, possessions and even the planet. Caring people show their concerns for others in active ways.

Caring people are:

- Kind
- Compassionate and show they care
- Express gratitude
- Forgive others
- Help people in need

## ***Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers***

You are constantly teaching your child something. When your infant cries and you respond, you are teaching them about caring for others. When they coo or smile and you respond in a similar way, you are teaching about caring. As your infant grows and becomes a toddler, she becomes interested in so many things around them, yet they can also become frustrated because they want something and have trouble expressing themselves. Using simple language explains to your toddler that soft touches are better than hitting or biting.

Explain that we are kind to our friends and family. You may find that you are repeating yourself often, but one day, you will be surprised to notice that the toddler has become a preschooler, is listening and knows how to act in a kind manner toward others. There are many ways to encourage your preschooler to be a caring person. Spend individual time with her each day; get down on her level to talk or listen; tell her that you like what she is doing; or read books about kindness and caring to her.

## ***Thank You Note Activity***

Even little ones can tell someone “thank you”. Help your child decorate a piece of paper with crayons or paints – you might want to add a footprint or hand print of your infant. Ask her what she would like to say to that special person and then read back what you have written. Include your child in mailing the note.

## ***School Age***

Help your school-age child understand caring with the following activity.



### ***How I Can Help Activity***

Give him a piece of paper and pencil or crayon and help him draw a gingerbread type figure on the paper. Or have your child lie on a large piece of paper and trace around them.

- Have him tell you five things he can do to help someone else. List those on the fingers
- Have him tell you five places he can go to help someone else. List those on the feet.
- Have him draw a shirt pocket on the figure and think of five things he can give to someone else to show he cares. List those on the pocket.

### ***Middle School and Teens***

Saying thank you to others for the kindness they show is important. It may not always be necessary to send formal, written thank-you notes but it is a thoughtful gesture to thank someone who has spent money, sent a gift or taken time to do something special. Even though e-mail plays a big part in our lives, the skill of hand-written notes is important for young people to learn. Help your child using the following as a guideline.

A thank you note should include:

- Reason you are writing the thank you note
- The occasion for the recognition or gift
- Reference to the gift
- Why the gift is important to you

### ***Practicing Caring 1***

Caring implies action, not just empty emotion. Caring people love, help, give and are kind. They are caretakers of people, pets, plants, possessions and even the planet. Caring people show their concern for others in an active way.

- Show kindness and compassion for others.
- Live by the Golden Rule.
- Think about what their decisions, word or actions will do to other people.
- Put concern for others into action.



Help your children learn to care for family members by making “caring coupons.” This is a great activity for young people of all ages because it costs no money and still is a special way to show family members they care. Have all family members think of caring acts that others appreciate and list these acts on the coupons.

Examples: one dishwashing job, yard work, extra house cleaning chores, keep TV/or loud music off while others are sleeping or washing a car.

### ***Practicing Caring 2***

Caring is at the heart of an ethical person’s character. It’s a guideline for how an ethical person relates to the world and its people. Make caring an action word, you can only truly care if you do something for others. A caring person is considerate, kind, compassionate and generous. That person always takes into account how decisions, words, and actions are going to affect other people.

### ***Exercise***

This month identify 2-3 people you think of as caring. Take a few minutes to interview each of these people to find out what motivates them. Ask who inspired them and who their heroes were when they were children and who they are now. After the interviews, consider what you have learned and decide if this information can help you be a more caring person.

