

Teaching Compassion to Children adapted from an article by Dr. Caron Goode

Compassion is the desire to assuage feelings of suffering in others. A compassionate person considers the sufferings of others as his own. But compassion is not pity and it is also different from altruism, which is simply an action of helping others. Compassion is a combination of feeling for someone else, experiencing the suffering and a positive move to reduce the suffering of others.

Today there is a need to make specific efforts to teach compassion to children for several reasons:

- High levels of competition in society are not limited to only the workplace but have percolated down to academics and [children's sports](#). Even young toddlers are not spared of vying for the best position in class or the maximum attention of the teacher.
- Our children today are more exposed to violence due to television programs and [video games](#). This in turn tends to increase violence in children themselves. Psychologists Craig A. Anderson, Ph. D., and Karen E. Dill, Ph. D. have said "...that even a brief exposure to violent video games can temporarily increase aggressive behavior in all types of participants" .

Teaching compassion can make our children aware of the world around them and teaches tolerance towards different cultures and personalities. This enables children to be more sensitive and caring, that in turn leads to better relationships with others as they grow into adulthood.

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All education begins in the home and so does teaching the virtue of being compassionate. Here are a few things that you can do to encourage compassionate actions in your children.

- Ensure that you express and show a lot of love and affection towards your child. When you have a relationship that's loving and secure with an adult, then you are probably going to be able to give to others in life the way you were given to.
- Communicate about the benefits of compassion - talk to your kids about how compassion can help them be better people. Your children need to understand how being compassionate can help them contribute to the society that they live in and make their life more meaningful and worthy. It also communicates that you believe and practice compassion as a family. The child then tries to model these virtues since he believes that he is part of the family and wants to be like other family members.
- Be a role model - The first thing that you need to know if you want to teach compassion is that a child's strongest example is when you exhibit compassion yourself. Compassionate acts truly do speak louder than words.
- Volunteer service as a family - The act of giving up certain things to others and helping others can provide a great sense of achievement and fulfillment to an individual. A family tradition of community service, setting aside of a certain amount every year for each member of the family to give away as charity, and praying together are among some of the family routines that go a long way in nurturing compassion so that it becomes an essential feature in the mindset of children.