

NEWSLETTER

WebParentTip, Vol4, # 7 for 7-2-03

Can parents teach COMPASSION to their children?

Sure kids are egocentric and are sometimes convinced the world revolves around them and them alone. Sure kids fight with their siblings and don't give a hoot about hurting their brother or sister's feelings.

But kids have an amazing amount of empathy. Even babies as young as a year old will pat another baby who is crying. Children identify with a hurt child on the playground and don't want to see anyone in pain.

What children need from us parents are the skills of compassion along with a few lessons on how important it is to be nice to children less fortunate than they are.

When your preschooler points to a child on crutches or wearing a hearing aid, your job is to explain that some children's legs or ears don't work well and they need extra help. Ask your children how they would feel if they needed extra help and someone pointed or laughed.

When you hear your kids laughing at a handicapped child or avoiding the child, model the correct behavior. Show your children how to include the handicapped child in their play.

If an older child seems shy around a handicapped child or adult, teach your child the correct approach. Start by explaining the problem (Tommy is blind but can talk and play with you just fine.). Then teach your child the appropriate rules (!When Tommy is playing here you can't leave any toys on the floor because he might trip and you take him to the bathroom by putting his hand on your shoulder so you can lead him.).

The skills of compassion are empathy, understanding and respecting the differences between people, and making the extra effort that is needed to minimize these differences.

Compassion is an important human attribute. Your children will benefit from learning about compassion and how to show compassion.