

# Raising Kind Kids

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**Live by and teach the Golden Rule:**  
***“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”***

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## Caring activities

- Go to your local animal shelter and volunteer with your child to help care for homeless animals.
- Plant flowers and shrubbery for butterflies, bees, and other wildlife in your backyard.
- During a walk at the beach, in the woods, or by a stream, pick up plastic rings, bottles, and other trash that can kill birds, turtles, dolphins, and other animals.
- Read your children books that show animals as feeling individuals, such as *Lassie Come Home*, *My Friend Flicka*, *Black Beauty*, *Charlotte’s Web*, *Frederick*, *Blueberries for Sal*, and *Make Way for Ducklings*.
- Watch animal-friendly movies, such as *Chicken Run*, *Bambi*, *Lady and the Tramp*, *Shiloh*, *Free Willy*, *Babe*, *My Dog Skip*, *Finding Nemo*, and *Shark Tale*.

**“Children trained to extend justice, kindness, and mercy to animals become more just, kind, and considerate in their relations to each other. Character training along these lines will result in men and women of broader sympathies; more humane, more law-abiding, in every respect more valuable citizens.”**

**—National PTA Congress**

**For more information on kind parenting, contact:**



## Compassion and empathy must be taught

Incorporating simple concepts of kindness and respect into our daily lives and teaching our children to respect and protect even the smallest and most despised among us will help them to value one another—and prevent violence. Because young children naturally identify with animals and because animals are living beings like us, we can use our interactions with them to teach children how to behave toward other people.

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**“One of the most dangerous things that can happen to a child is to kill or torture an animal and get away with it.”**

—*Margaret Mead, Ph.D.*

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## Why do some children become violent?

Recent schoolyard shootings and decades of evidence show that a child’s attitude toward animals can predict future behavior. According to published reports, in every highly publicized school shooting, one warning sign appeared consistently: All the young killers abused or killed animals before turning on their classmates. According to FBI profilers, psychiatric professionals, law-enforcement officials, and child advocacy organizations, people who hurt animals may eventually direct violence toward humans. Cruelty to animals is considered one of three symptoms that predict the development of a psychopath and is included as a criterion for a conduct disorder in children by the American Psychiatric Association.



Without empathy, it is easy to depersonalize animals or people into unfeeling machines. So when these kids hurt someone, they don’t realize that it’s wrong, and they can’t feel the distress or agony that they are causing. Teaching kindness and respect for animals is the first step in teaching children empathy.

## Teach kindness by example

- Listen to yourself with new ears—don’t yell “shut up,” “stupid dog,” or other hurtful things.
- Never hit animals.
- Show that you value animals’ lives by being patient with them, making sure they all wear an ID tag, spaying or neutering them to prevent unwanted litters, giving them plenty of clean water, and providing regular veterinary care.
- Include your animals in your life. Allow your dog to live inside with the family, and spend time with your companion animals daily, brushing them, playing with them, and walking them.
- Sometimes tiny creatures wander into our homes—help them find their way out gently.
- Avoid statements—even those made in jest—such as “I hate cats” or “Chickens are stupid.”
- Toys entertain, but they also influence our children. Do not buy toys that even hint at animal exploitation, such as video games that allow children to kill animals or model zoos and circus trains.



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**“These are the kids who never learned it’s wrong to poke out a puppy’s eyes.”**

—*Robert Ressler, founder of the FBI’s behavioral sciences unit, on where serial killers come from*

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