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The Importance of Teaching Mercy to Children


Modified : December 22,2015




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Teaching children to be kind, compassionate, forgiving, and merciful is important, especially in a world where bullying is such a huge problem. According to [BullyingStatistics.org](http://www.bullyingstatistics.org) (<http://www.bullyingstatistics.org/content/bullying-statistics-2010.html>), approximately one out of seven students in school has been a victim of a bully or a bully. While there are currently many campaigns and programs to end bullying, bullying statistics (<http://nobullying.com/bullying-statistics/>) continue to show that this is a serious problem. One of the best ways to stop the bullying problem is for parents to start teaching children important values and characteristics at home. **Teaching children important values, such as showing mercy to others, can help stop bullying before it begins. Here's a closer look at the definition of mercy, the importance of leading your children by example, and some helpful ideas you can use to teach your children how to be merciful to others.**

Learning from the Mercy Definition

What is mercy? Before you can teach your child about this important characteristic, you have to define merciful. According to the Oxford Dictionaries (http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/mercy), the definition of mercy is "Compassion or forgiveness shown toward someone whom it is within one's power to punish or harm."

Mercy is all about a combination of compassion and forgiveness, even when it's possible to harm someone else. In fact, being merciful involves being compassionate and forgiving when someone else does not deserve it.

It is easy to be angry with someone and to treat that individual badly, which is why bullying often

occurs. Sometimes bullies bully other children because they are angry at something else in their life and they take it out on someone else. In other cases, bullies may become angry at something another child does to them, so they lash back instead of showing mercy and compassion.

Conflicts are bound to happen to children, no matter their age. As children grow older, conflicts are more likely to linger (<http://nobullying.com/conflict-resolution-strategies/>). It is important for children to learn to show mercy when conflicts occur instead of holding onto anger and bitterness.

Leading Your Children By Example

How do you begin teaching mercy to your children? One of the best ways you can teach your kids to be merciful, forgiving, and compassionate is to start **leading by example** (<http://www.sheknows.com/parenting/articles/822267/teaching-your-kids-about-forgiveness>). When children are young, they learn a lot from observation. If you want them to learn about mercy, then you have to show children how to be merciful in your own life.

Are you treating others with mercy? Do you treat your children with compassion? Are you forgiving when your children do something wrong?

It's important to ask yourself these questions because your children will learn so much from your actions. Think about how you treat others, especially your children. For example, if your child drops a glass full of juice on the floor, do you get angry and yell at your child or do you show mercy and forgiveness? If someone at work does something unkind to you, do your children see you lash out at that person?

You will find that you can teach small lessons in mercy in everyday life. When your child forgets his chores and is genuinely sorry, your reaction will teach a lesson. If your spouse does something that upsets you, you have a chance to show compassion instead of anger. Start paying attention to the small things in life, taking every chance possible to show your children how to show mercy to others.

Helpful Ideas for Teaching Kids to Be Merciful

Being merciful involves a combination of compassion and forgiveness. (<http://nobullying.com/how-to-forgive-someone/>) While it's essential to make sure you lead your children by example, you can also use other measures to help your child learn more about this important characteristic. Here are some helpful ideas you can use to teach your children to be merciful to others.

- **Start the Conversation with Kids** – Start the conversation with your children about mercy. You can start by talking to them about their school life. Do your children notice children who eat alone at lunch? Encourage them to show compassion and take the time to show kindness to those kids. If your child notices that another child is being unkind or unforgiving to someone else, talk about it with your child and how things could be done differently.

- **Use Media to Show Opportunities for Compassion and Mercy** – Family Minute (<http://www.familyminute.com/articles/parenting/general-parenting/10-ways-to-teach-your-children-to-be-compassionate/#.VSRkTpOAmDk>) recommends turning the tables on the negative media to show children opportunities for being compassionate and merciful. The internet and the television often show children bad examples, and unfortunately, it is difficult for parents to filter out these bad messages. However, you can use media to show your children where they could do things differently.

When you see something on television or the web that shows a lack of forgiveness, compassion, or mercy, you should take the time to talk to your children about the situation. Point out what could have happened if someone would have used compassion, forgiveness, and kindness.

- **Consider Getting a Pet for the Family** – Another great idea is to consider getting a pet for your family, since animals can teach kids so many great qualities. Having a pet can teach kids compassion, forgiveness, mercy, responsibility, and so much more. The way your child treats a pet will be a huge indication of his character, and if you see characteristics that are unwanted, you can work with your child to change them. Let your child have some daily responsibilities when caring for the pet, teaching them how to care for the wellbeing of someone else instead of just focusing on their own needs.

- **Teach Kids to Look Beyond Actions to the Person** – When it comes to the treatment of other people, you need to teach your kids to look beyond actions to the person (<http://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2013/02/27/how-to-teach-a-child-forgiveness/>), especially when it comes to being merciful or forgiving. If another child calls your kid a name during recess, encourage your child to think about what that child may have been experiencing. Maybe that child was upset he was being left out. Perhaps the child was upset because of problems in his family. When children learn to look at the person instead of just the action, they are more likely to respond with compassion and forgiveness instead of being mean and hateful back.

- **Encourage Children to Talk About Problems** – According to Parenting.com (<http://www.parenting.com/article/forgiveness-101>), it's important to teach children to talk about problems, which can help children learn to talk things out and extend forgiveness and mercy. When someone else hurts a child, the child needs to know that it is okay to feel angry about the problem. However, instead of lashing out with anger, suggest that your child talks to the offender in a kind, calm way about the problem. (<http://nobullying.com/i-need-someone-to-talk-to/>) Children can explain that the action made them feel bad and that they do not want the offender to repeat the action. This teaches your child to be merciful instead of being angry and hateful to the offender.

Mercy is often a hard concept for children to understand, but it's important for children learn how to be merciful to others. When parents lead by example, they can help their children learn how to show this characteristic to others. By using these tips, it's possible to teach your child more about being merciful, compassionate, and forgiving, preventing your child from turning into a bully in the future.

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