



9 Ways to Teach Nonviolence, Kindness, and Peacefulness to Children

1. **Embrace your role as a wise and kind teacher for your children.** Be loving, patient, and optimistic with your children as you teach them to identify and creatively solve problems. Teach self-discipline rather than disciplining them. Teach them to open their hearts, release fear, and try to feel others' feelings when resolving interpersonal problems.
2. **Practice recognizing, labeling, and complimenting specific instances of kindness and cooperative problem solving.** Teach your children to do the same.
3. **Open your children's hearts to the reality of the physical and emotional suffering caused by violence.** Unfortunately, there are limitless opportunities for sharing stories of deep pain caused by violence.
4. **Help your children understand that people become mean or violent because others have been mean or violent to them.** When the media reports an incidence of violence, instead of merely condemning the perpetrator to your children, explore what must have happened in the perpetrator's life to cause him to feel such rage. Instead of asking, "How could that person ever do that?," explain: "There are reasons for that kind of rage. We all have a responsibility in our society to prevent anyone from becoming that angry."
5. **Invite children to admire and identify with role models of nonviolence** such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi. Learn more about people who exemplify nonviolence and love for humanity, and let your children know that you admire them.
6. **Override the adage "boys will be boys," that allows us to neglect our responsibility to teach boys nonviolence.** All children deserve to learn how to build the power of their intellect, intuition, and capacity to nonviolently solve problems, as well as their capacity to love.
7. **Clearly tell manufacturers and retailers that you don't like violent toys, war games, or violent video games by not buying them. Clearly inform the movie industry that you don't want violent movies by not seeing them.** Violent movies, toys, and TV desensitize

children to violence, and blur the lines between fantasy and reality.

8. **Reinforce that “Peace Begins at Home.”** For example, if two of your children are having a dispute, suggest that they pretend that they are the leaders of two countries that are having a conflict and it is their job to resolve the conflict without resorting to war.
9. **Acknowledge with children the reality of our violent history and our many violent customs.** Discuss how difficult it is to change ways of thinking and acting that have been around for hundreds to thousands of years. Share how important it is for any culture to step back and reevaluate itself from time to time, and to make decisions as to what practices should be eliminated or added if that culture is to thrive. Invite children to share their ideas of peace-making rituals.

Remember that your own behavior has great impact. The most powerful changes will occur as a direct result of our willingness to courageously confront deeply ingrained habits and customs that do not serve the creation of a peaceful, wise, and kind society.

© 1997 Cheryl Landy, Ph.D. (Adapted). Dr. Landy's passion in helping to create a more peaceful and caring society, and in helping to prevent child abuse, is rooted in over 20 years of intensive clinical experience. She works to increase the "emotional intelligence" (i.e. knowledge of emotional and interpersonal processes, including as they interrelate to academic/cognitive functioning) of parents, administrators, teachers, parents, and students.

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