We hear a lot about teaching children to be kind and compassionate toward each other. But what does that look like in middle school? Consider these ideas for encouraging your child to show kindness and compassion.

**Spot it**
When you ask your tween what he did in school today, you could also ask about acts of kindness. Maybe he smiled at a classmate who seemed nervous during a presentation, or perhaps a friend invited a less popular classmate to join their lunch table. Then, tell him about compassionate people you encountered, such as the coworker who listened to your problem with a customer—and helped you fix it.

**Reach out**
Suggest that your middle grader get involved in a school or community activity that promotes compassion. He could be a “Best Buddy” for a classmate with special needs, for example. (If his school doesn’t have a Best Buddies club, he might start one.) Or he can look into Operation Troop Support, which puts together care packages for military overseas.

**Start a habit**
Encourage family members to be kind and compassionate toward each other, and talk about what those acts could be. They may be as simple as doing the dishes for Dad when he’s tired or sending an encouraging text to a sibling before a big volleyball game. Tip: Be sure to notice your child’s kindnesses—you’ll inspire him to continue acting that way.

**Spring-fever busters**
Does warm weather seem to be calling your tween outside? Help her stay focused on her studies, while still enjoying the outdoors, with these strategies.

- **Finish homework first.** She might do it immediately after school or on weekend mornings. Then, she can spend time outdoors with friends in the neighborhood.
- **Work outside.** Your middle schooler could spread out a blanket in the backyard or sit on the porch and do her work there. Or she might pack a picnic and invite a friend to study at the park with her.
- **Take active breaks.** When your tween finishes reviewing for a quiz, she can walk around the block, do stretches, or jump rope. She’ll burn off energy and be able to concentrate better on her remaining homework.
Keys to collaboration

If your child is a good collaborator, she’ll be able to work well with classmates on school projects and activities. Plus, she’ll be better prepared for today’s team-oriented workplace. Suggest these tips for effective collaboration.

- **Create a plan.** Make sure everyone’s on the same page. If your tween is doing a group project, she might ask a question to get the group started. (“Okay, so which famous person are we going to focus on?”)
- **Let everyone contribute.** To give all group members a chance to think, she should wait a few seconds before jumping in after someone poses a question. Once she comments, she could use the “three before me” rule—wait for three others to speak before she chimes in again.
- **Be a consensus builder.** Encourage your middle grader to look for compromises the group can agree on. For example, if one person had hoped to do a funny skit, maybe they could inject some humor into an otherwise serious presentation.
- **Make decisions together.** Even if everyone did different parts, the final product needs to feel seamless. As she and her partners put together the project, they should try to make the most of each person’s talents and contributions.

Tease your brain

Stretch your middle grader’s math skills with brainteasers like these. He’ll think they feel more like fun than work!

1. At a party, each person shakes hands with everyone else once. There are 45 handshakes. How many people are at the party?
2. Sam added eight 8s and got the number 1,000. How did he do that?
3. Think about a digital clock. In a 12-hour period of time, what’s the shortest break between two times that are palindromes (the numbers read the same forward and backward)?
4. Carol spent \( \frac{1}{5} \) of the money in her purse. Then she spent \( \frac{1}{5} \) of what was left. She spent $36 total. How much did she start with?

Turn upside down for the answers.

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\begin{align*}
1. & \quad 10 \times 10 = 100 + 10 = 110 \\
2. & \quad 88 \times 88 = 7776 \\
3. & \quad 10 hourly between 8:59 and 11:00 \\
4. & \quad 1 \times 10 = 10 + 8 + 8 + 8 + 8 = 41 \text{ (check: } 36 \div 3 = 12) \\
\end{align*}
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Our purpose

To provide busy parents with practical ideas that promote school success, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

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