

Positive+Parent™ Newsletter

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Shaya Kass, PhD

www.PositiveParentPlus.com

RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS

Treat everyone with politeness, even those who are rude to you - not because they are nice, but because you are. - Author Unknown

The unknown author of today's quote missed an important point. Once you start treating the rude person with politeness, you will no longer perceive him or her as rude!

I have written before about "cognitive dissonance" which simply means that humans do not like to hold two opposing thoughts in their mind at the same time. This plays out in children when they have to blame the other kids for starting a fight. Your child might think something like this: I want to think of myself as a good person. Good people don't fight with others for no reason. Therefore, if I fought with Johnny today, I must have a good reason. That reason must be - Johnny started it.

Your child may have a hard time holding the two thoughts that they are a good person and that they did not have a good reason for fighting with Johnny at the same time. The only way for your child to make sense of this is to say that Johnny had it coming.

This very often plays out among siblings. If two siblings are always fighting, they might get used to the idea that their brother or sister is a bad kid and deserves to be bothered or fought with.

So how can you stop this vicious cycle? One way is through random acts of kindness. If I do something nice for Johnny, I will have a hard time believing

that Johnny is worthy of fighting or rudeness and that Johnny is a bad kid. He is either one or the other. If we can get our kids to do just a few kind acts to Johnny or just a few nice things for their brother or sister, then we can break the cycle and end the fighting.

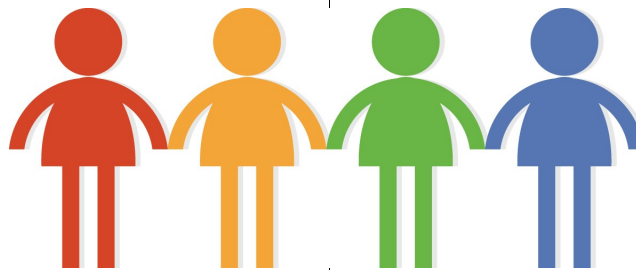
Another way to accomplish this is to simply talk about Johnny's redeeming qualities. Perhaps Johnny is a good sport. Or perhaps Johnny is helpful in class. When you discuss ways that Johnny is not a bad kid, you create cognitive dissonance between Johnny being a good kid and me fighting with Johnny.

Yet another way to accomplish this is to invite Johnny over for a playdate. Once I get to play with Johnny and experience his good qualities, I will no longer be able to fight with him

without creating cognitive dissonance.

There is one more possibility, and this goes back to our quote. You can convince your child that they are nice and that nice kids don't fight. This may be the best choice for the long term. Once your child sees themselves as a nice kid, and they believe that nice kids don't fight, are not rude and are friendly, they will act nicely.

This will also help smooth out relationships at home between siblings. If I am a nice kid and my brother is a nice kid, we won't be fighting. This will set your kids up for a life-long relationship of love and respect for their siblings – and probably you as well!



You can reach me by email at DrShaya@PositiveParentPlus.com I love to hear reader comments.

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