**Caring**

Caring is a character trait which can be described with the words compassion, loving, or kindness. A caring person is concerned about others and says or does nice things to help them or make them feel special. Empathy, the ability to feel what another person is feeling is an important part of caring. When you can imagine “walking in the shoes” of another person, it helps you to be kind and caring.

Another word which helps us to understand how to be caring is “altruism.” The definition of altruism is “feelings and behavior that show a desire to help other people and a lack of selfishness” or “unselfish concern for the welfare of others.” As we strive to be more caring, the “Golden Rule” is a good guideline: treat others the way you would like to be treated.

The children’s book, *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?* by Carol McCloud provides a wonderful way to help kids to understand what it means to be caring. In this book, Ms. McCloud states that in life, everyone carries an invisible bucket each day. The purpose of the bucket is to carry our good thoughts and feelings. We feel happy when our buckets are full and sad when they are empty. The author tells us that we can fill the bucket of another person when we show love, say or do something kind, or even by smiling! When we fill the bucket of another person, we are filling our own bucket as well. The book includes some suggested actions for “bucket filling,” and provides a reminder to children AND adults that “bucket filling makes everyone feel good.”

Another way of showing caring is the concept of “paying it forward.” This idea was made popular by a movie of the same name, and involves doing something good for someone in response to a kind act you have received from someone else. The idea is that you don’t repay the person who has helped you, which you may not be able to do at the time, but instead you do something kind for someone else. The idea is not a new one! Benjamin Franklin suggested this practice in a letter he wrote to Benjamin Webb in 1784, in which he wrote about his intention to help Webb by lending him some money. Franklin did not wish to be repaid directly but instead he instructed Webb, “…when you meet with another honest man in similar distress, you must pay me by lending this sum to him; enjoining him to discharge the debt by a like operation, when he shall be able and shall meet with such another opportunity, I hope it may thus go through many hands before it meets with a knave that will stop its progress. This is a trick of mine for doing a deal of good with a little money. I am not rich enough to afford much in good works, and so am obliged to be cunning and make the most of little.”

This fable by Aesop is a story of kindness paid and repaid. It reveals that caring and kind acts can come from the small and weak as well as the big and powerful! And it is a good reminder that when we show kindness to others it often comes back to us!

**The Lion and the Mouse**

An Aesop’s Fable on Caring

One day a great lion lay asleep in the sunshine. A little mouse ran across his paw and wakened him. The great lion thought that the little mouse could be of any use to him. But he laughed at the thought. The little mouse cried, “Oh, please, let me go, sir. Someday I may help you!” The lion was just going to eat him when the little mouse instructed Webb, “…wished to be repaid directly but instead he instructed Webb, “…when you meet with another honest man in similar distress, you must pay me by lending this sum to him; enjoining him to discharge the debt by a like operation, when he shall be able and shall meet with such another opportunity, I hope it may thus go through many hands before it meets with a knave that will stop its progress. This is a trick of mine for doing a deal of good with a little money. I am not rich enough to afford much in good works, and so am obliged to be cunning and make the most of little.”

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**“Those who bring sunshine into the lives of others cannot keep it from themselves.”**

*James M. Barrie*
What is Caring?
- Being kind and compassionate.
- Helping others.
- Having empathy—the ability to feel what another person is feeling.
- Being altruistic—having an unselfish concern for the welfare of others.
- Giving your time and talents to others.

Practicing Caring
- Treat others the way you would like to be treated.
- Look for ways to be kind and thoughtful to others.
- Show sympathy and compassion for those who are less fortunate.
- Reach out to help and give to others.
- Stand up for others.
- Be a friend!
- Take part in community service.
- Be a good listener.
- Share your skills and knowledge.
- Smile at others!

Applying Caring
- Set a goal to perform one or more random acts of kindness every day.
- Think of others as more important than yourself.
- Tell loved ones that you love them.
- Encourage and inspire others.
- Respect the property of others.
- Help with chores.
- Visit, call or send a card to a person you know is ill or lonely.
- Look for the good in others and give words of praise.
- Bring out the best in others.
- If you can’t say something nice, don’t say anything at all!
- Take a meal to a family that has been struck by illness or difficulties. If you are a parent, take your children with you so that they can observe your kindness and the example you set.
- Find opportunities to make the holidays brighter for other families or seniors who are alone.
- Organize a fundraiser to provide assistance for a worthy cause or a family struck by tragedy.
- Perform your acts of caring with no expectation of receiving a return.
- “Pay it forward” by repaying a kind act that was done for you by doing something kind for another person.

Personal Commitments to Caring:
- I will find ways every day to show caring to others and perform acts of kindness.
- I will be a “bucket filler.”
- I will treat others the way I would like to be treated.
- I will reach out with kindness to another who may be unpopular or need a friend.
- I will give to others in need.
- I will try to make a difference in the lives of others.

Quotes
“Kind words do not cost much….Yet they accomplish much.”
Blaise Pascal

“The best part of a good person’s life is the little nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and love.”
William Wordsworth

“I have this theory that if one person can go out of their way to show compassion, then it will start a chain reaction of the same.”
Rachel Scott

“I may be compelled to face danger, but never fear it, and while our soldiers stand and fight, I can stand and feed and nurse them.”
Clara Barton

"Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today. Let us begin."
Mother Teresa

“Let me be a little kinder, let me be a little blinder to the faults of those around me, let me praise a little more.”
Edgar Albert Guest

“Forget not that the earth is round, and there is air enough for all.”
Jane Austen

“Constant kindness can accomplish much. As the sun makes ice melt, kindness causes misunderstanding, mistrust, and hostility to evaporate.”
Albert Schweitzer

References

Books and Movies of Character

**Fiction Books**
- The Giving Tree by Shel Silverstein (Preschool to 5th grade)
- Have You Filled a Bucket Today? by Carol McCloud (Preschool to 6th grade)
- Charlotte’s Web by E. B. White (3rd to 7th grade)
- The Piano by William Miller (Kindergarten to 3rd grade)
- When I Care About Others by Cornelia Maude Spelman (Preschool to 3rd grade)
- Wonder by RJ Palacio (3rd to 7th grade)
- The Friendship Doll by Kirby Larson (4th to 7th grade)

**Nonfiction Books**
- Caring by Robin Doak (Preschool to 3rd grade)
- Nubs: The True Story of a Mutt, a Marine & a Miracle by Major Brian Dennis, Kirby Larson, and Mary Nethery (Preschool to Adult)
- Learning About Compassion From the Life of Florence Nightingale by Kiki Mosher (K to 4th grade)

**Clara Barton: Founder of the American Red Cross** by Augusta Stevenson

**Movies**
- Miracle on 34th Street
- A Christmas Carol

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