

Encouraging and rewarding kindness are vital for the healthy development of young children's brains. Kindness hearts offer a tactile way to talk about how we can be kind and to express thankfulness towards others.

## Showing kindness

The best way for children to develop kind and grateful behaviour is to see it modelled by those around them. Consider whether there are any additional ways adults in your setting can model kindness and thankfulness to children – from saying thank you when you see a child doing something kind to involving them in helping someone else with you. You might also like to display photos of children doing kind things, such as tidying, playing together or helping.

## Words of kindness

Talking about kindness will develop children's language and understanding in this area. Children may enjoy simply holding a Kindness heart as you have these discussions:

- What are kind thoughts, actions or words?
- How can we have kind hands, words or feet?
- Talk about the different aspects of being kind: sharing, helping, comforting and being friendly.
- Use a puppet or other character and encourage children to teach it how it can show kindness to others. You could have more than one puppet interacting together, and children reward a puppet with a Kindness heart when it does something kind. If the puppet does something unkind, how can it change its behaviour to show kindness instead?
- Give a group of children a Kindness heart each. Take it in turns to place a heart in a basket or hoop and tell everyone about something that makes you feel happy or something kind that someone else does for you.
- Talk about the people who do kind things for us, such as family members, friends, teachers or people who help us.
- Discuss how we can be kind towards other children in different situations, such as when someone doesn't have anyone to play with, when someone is feeling sad, when there's tidying up that needs doing or when someone would like to play with something you're using.
- Talk about how we can be kind towards people or animals outside the setting, such as by raising money for a charity, visiting a nursing home, donating to a food bank, or caring for local wildlife with a bird feeder or bug hotel.
- With a group of children, take it in turns to think of a kind word to describe someone else in the group (such as 'brave', 'generous' or 'thoughtful'), and give that person a Kindness heart as you tell the group your word.



## Turn kindness into play

Offer the Kindness hearts as part of open-ended play and activities:

- Allow children access to the hearts, so they can give one to another child to say thank you or to express kindness/friendship whenever they choose.





- Place a Kindness heart into a jar or basket whenever you see an act of kindness shown by a child. Have a celebration to reward the children when the container is full.
- If a child tells you about someone else doing something kind, encourage them to present them with a Kindness heart to thank them.
- Offer the hearts as part of a sensory collection of colourful loose parts, such as floaty fabrics, gemstones, colourful sand, and small bags or boxes to hide the hearts in.
- Hide the hearts for children to discover in a sensory material, such as sand, biodegradable sensory goo, coloured water, ice or bubble foam (made by whisking two parts water to one part sensitive bubble bath using a handheld mixer until it forms stiff peaks).

## Explore more

As an open-ended resource, you could also use the Kindness hearts to support other activities:

- Sort the hearts by colour, or match the colour pairs.
- Create patterns with reflective or rotational symmetry.
- Draw around the hearts on colourful paper, then cut the shapes out and use them to create thank-you cards.
- Trace around the hearts, cut the shapes out and stick them onto a large picture of a tree. You might like to write kind words or actions on the hearts, recording how the children have shown kindness to others.
- Use the hearts to support exploring feelings more generally. You could use them alongside Yellow Door resources such as Emotion stones or Let's Roll Emotions.



- Add the hearts to small world play, alongside family figures or people who help us. Alternatively, they could be used as stepping stones in a fantasy world, together with stacking rainbows, fairy tale figures, cotton wool clouds and a fabric river.
- For more creative ideas, download Yellow Door's [free Kindness poster](#) and see the blog post on [the Power of Kindness and Gratitude](#) by Carole Rawley. (Find the links at [yellow-door.net/products/kindness-hearts](http://yellow-door.net/products/kindness-hearts))

### *Get talking – useful words*

Kind, caring, generous, friendly, share/sharing, help/helping, give/giving, comfort/comforting, please, thank you, thankful, grateful.

## Books about kindness

*Be Kind* by Pat Zietlow Miller

*The Selfish Crocodile* by Faustin Charles

*Hugasaurus* by Rachel Bright

*A Dog's Tale* by Michael Rosen