

# 5 Most Common Mistakes Teachers Make When Teaching Kind Kids



## 1. Forcing Kindness

Students *have to WANT* to be kind so it can't be forced. Children won't want to be kind unless they *KNOW* they are safe and welcomed and *FEEL* safe and welcomed.

## 2. Assuming Kids Know How to Be Kind

Some kids may know, but most kids don't know how to be kind. We must show them, and talk about kindness, read about kindness, and teach them how to be includers.

## 3. Talking About Kindness Only Once

Talking about kindness can not only be a one time event. We have to be a broken record and talk about it often and encourage it often to make kindness an everyday habit.

## 4. Forgetting to Walk the Walk

It can be easy to forget to be kind when we're in tough situations or having a bad day, but our students are watching us. We need to model kindness towards our colleagues and students.

## 5. Teaching Kids to be Nice

Nice kids want something in return for being nice. They're nice when it's convenient for them. Kind people want to be kind because they have compassion and empathy for others and genuinely want to help someone who needs it.

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# 1. Instead of Forcing Kindness, Get them to WANT to be Kind



Just like with reading and learning, we can't force a child to be kind.

We can encourage it. We can tell them this is what we do.

But you can't force a kid to act and speak with kindness any more than you can force them to learn their math facts.

So it's our job as educators to set the stage so our students WANT to be kind.

How?

Kids will only be kind when they feel safe, welcomed, and secure and their physical and emotional needs are met.

If they're tired or hungry or too hot, all bets are off.

No one feels like being kind when they're tired and cranky.

If they feel like life is unfair because they're teased or bullied or laughed at, there's no way they can be kind.

The quickest and easiest way to set our students up to WANT to be kind is to connect with our students and make sure they feel welcome in our classrooms and feel safe on our playgrounds.

## Try it Now:

As an educator, we have to look for hidden signs our students might be being bullied or teased when we're not looking. If our students don't feel safe, they will never be able to learn in our classrooms let alone be kind to others.

## **2. Instead of Assuming Kids Know How to Be Kind, We have to Teach Them**

*Some kids are intrinsically more kind-hearted than their peers or siblings. It's just in them.*

*But most kids are egocentric and don't have the brain maturity to be mindful of others and think how their actions will effect others.*

*So we can't assume our students know what kindness is and how to speak and act with kindness.*

*The good news is, kindness is a learned behavior and we can intentionally teach our students how to be kind.*

*Teachers are busy. We don't have time to add in one more thing.*

*But teaching our students how to act and speak with kindness can be done while we teach other curriculum.*

*We can weave these "kindness lessons" into our everyday lesson plans.*

*And we can use teachable moments that happen in social situations.*

### **Try it Now:**

*When you see a moment where your students could have been kinder, mention it without "punishing" or belittling the behavior. Tell them, "Next time, try this: ...." and give them a suggestion for being more polite or more thoughtful or more generous or more mindful of others. And use curriculum that ties kindness in as you teach language arts and social studies and art.*

### **3. Instead of Talking about Kindness once, repeat, repeat, repeat!**



In the history of education, rarely if ever, has a teacher said something once and never had to repeat it again.

That's just not how education works.

We know that we have to repeat lessons and teaching standards and learning social etiquette and procedures

Teaching our students to be kind is no different.

We can't tell our students one time to act and speak with kindness and expect that to sink in.

We have to be relentlessly consistent.

We have to be broken records and remind them often.


We have to make sure they know our message by heart: In our classroom, we are kind.

And since we talk about it often, our kids will realize we value kindness as much as we value reading and writing, and math. They'll know we think it's essential and that kindness is an essential part of our classroom and school environment.

#### **Try it Now:**

Use your Morning Meeting or the few minutes before the bell rings to sneak in conversations about kindness. Use our Skittles Game or Trash or Kindness or 60 Discussion Starters.

## 4. Instead of Just Talking about Kindness we have to Model It

We all know that even when we think they're not, our students are listening and watching our every move. 

They're soaking it in and will remind us of what we said or did weeks or months later.

We're one of their role models. So kindness has to start with us.

If we want our students to act and speak with kindness, we have to do the same.

Even when we don't feel like it.

Students breaking the rules? We respond with kindness.

Mean colleague? We respond with kindness.

Rude administrator? We respond with kindness.

Because we can't expect our students to be kind if we're not walking the walk and talking the talk. Literally.

So we have to be mindful of how we act and react...especially when our students are with us.

Our students are watching. Let's give them something good to watch.

### **Try it Now:**

Go out of your way to be kind to 3 people on campus today you don't know: Smile. Hold the door open. Thank a student. Offer to help someone who needs it. Greet students you don't know.

## 5. Instead of Nice, we have to focus on Kindness

"Kind" and "Nice" are often used interchangeably so it makes sense that many adults use the word "nice" to describe the behaviors they want their students to exhibit.

But "kind" and "nice" are most definitely not the same thing.

We don't want nice kids. We want kind kids.

Why?

"Nice" people act in ways that might be helpful, or polite, but they do it for something in return. They want something.

Nice people bend over backwards for the principal but not the custodian. Nice people are generous with colleagues and clients but not to the server at the restaurant.

People often use their niceness to get something in return, so their behavior can often come across as being fake or insincere.

But...kind people are kind to everyone: principals and custodians get the same treatment. Because they're both people.

Kind people go out of their way to make someone else's day a little better without expecting or needing repayment or gratitude.

And kind people want to be kind because they have compassion and empathy for others and genuinely want to help someone who needs it.

**Try it Now:**

Avoid using the word "nice" to describe behaviors you value. Remind your students that kind people are kind even when no one is looking... so they need to be kind to classmates even when adults aren't around.