

# “Love”

The Bible tells us to love one another, “A new command I give you: Love one another...” John 13:34 (NIV). But, even as adults it’s not always easy at times to love. If you have more than one child, then you know that the fighting between them can seem endless. And while it may drive us parents crazy, it’s actually quite normal because it is through this sibling rivalry that kids learn to manage conflict. However, where is the line between ‘normal’ and ‘not normal’? How can you be assured that your kids will grow up and eventually get along? The feeling of love is first felt, learned, and nurtured in the home. How do you teach your children to love and care for others? Here are 12 ways:

## 1. Start early – make good relationships a priority.

Even if you have teenagers, it’s not too late. However, if you have babies, toddlers, or younger children, you’re in luck. You have a wonderful opportunity to start early. Make sure you teach them the importance of getting along and being kind to one another. Model that behavior yourself, too.

## 2. Teach them to have a ‘We mentality,’ not a ‘Me mentality.’

Let’s face it – human beings are inherently selfish. It’s pretty much a survival mechanism. So, what parents have to do is to socialize their kids out of the ‘Me mentality.’ Tell your kids that they are a team. In fact, the whole family is a team. Everyone’s actions affect everyone else’s. If you remind them enough times, it will eventually sink in.



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### 3. Demonstrate and teach positive ways to work through arguments.

First, look at yourself. How do you work through conflict with other people (especially the other parent)? Do you yell and scream at each other? Or do you sit down peacefully and work out your problems in a rational manner? Hopefully, it's the latter. But if not, you need to start by working on your conflict skills. Once you have learned how to work through arguments yourself, you can teach your kids to do the same.

### 4. Recognize and encourage all of your children when one of them accomplishes something.

Maybe Johnny won a basketball championship. Or perhaps Jane brought home straight A's all year. Whatever it is, make sure that you celebrate all accomplishments. Also, have the kids congratulate and affirm each other.

### 5. Teach them to respect each other's personal space and possessions.

Personal boundaries are important to many people. And when boundaries are crossed, usually a conflict ensues. Teach your children that sometimes people just need to be alone. And if they want to borrow a toy or another possession, they should ask permission. They should not just 'take' from another person and assume that everything will be okay.



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## 6. Show how to give and receive an apology.

I’m sure we’ve all seen pathetic apologies from our kids many times. I know I have. You know the one: where they roll their eyes and mumble that they’re sorry. Make them look at each other in the eyes, speak clearly, and say, “I’m sorry,” over and over until you think they sound like they mean it. Then tell them that it’s easy to say those words, but when someone is *really* sorry, they change their behavior.

## 7. Consistently remind them that they are not the center of the universe.

Unfortunately, many adults don’t even know this. But if you teach your kids this simple fact early, it will help them get along. Everything will not always go your way. Sometimes you have to compromise. See #2 again about developing a ‘We mentality.’

## 8. Model good behavior yourself.

You can’t change what you don’t model yourself. So, you might want your kids to get along and love each other more, but if you are not showing them how to do it through your own actions, then they will never learn. Children model behavior more than they listen to your words.



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## 9. Never speak poorly of anyone in the family.

If you're angry at your spouse, that's understandable. It happens all the time. But if you go around and say negative things about him or her to your children, then that will teach them that it's alright to badmouth people. Make sure your words about everyone are positive. Even if you're pointing out something that needs to be changed, you can say, "I know you can do better." Never, ever, model bad or critical language in front of your children.

## 10. Have them make each other birthday and Christmas presents.

This tells them that it is important to remember their siblings on special occasions. Christmas is not just about how many presents you receive. It's also about giving to loved ones. And so are birthdays. It need not be big. A simple handmade gift or card is the best!

## 11. Establish positive family dinner routines.

Having regular family dinners together helps children stay out of trouble as they grow up. It is a time for everyone to talk and communicate. So, start a ritual where everyone goes around the table and says something they love and appreciate about other members of the family. That establishes the fact that everyone loves and respects everyone. Eventually, affirming and speaking loving words to each other will become a habit.



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## 12. Have them say, “I love you,” and hug and encourage each other.

Even if you don't come from an affectionate family, it's never too late to start the hugs and kisses, and saying, “I love you.” Saying hello and goodbye with a hug shows that you love and respect another person. And using words of encouragement also adds to the affection that is shown.

As I said in the beginning, it's never too late to start teaching your children to love and care for one another. All it takes is some conscious effort on your part. But it's worth it. Model, teach, and encourage loving acts in your home! Remember, showing love outside the home begins with learning the lessons and practicing loving acts inside the home first!



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## Reference

Morgan, C. (2020). 13 Ways to Raise Kids who Love and Care for Each Other. Downloaded from: <https://www.lifehack.org/articles/lifestyle/13-ways-raise-kids-who-love-and-care-for-each-other.html>



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