



## **CARING**

### **A Pillar of Character Counts!**

Are you a caring person? What things do you care about? Is it important to be a caring person? Yes, because the caring actions and words we use to help others inspire hope in their lives and have a ripple effect in our communities and our world.

One definition of caring is “to display kindness and concern”. There are many synonyms for the word “caring”, and most of those are adjectives that lead to actions! These words and these actions come directly from the heart of a person with loving care.

*"There never was any heart truly great and generous that was not also tender and compassionate."*

~Bishop Robert South, British author (1634-1716)

### **What Does It Mean to Be a Caring Person?**

First, to be caring, we have to be concerned about others, whether they are people, or animals, or the environment. Responsible people will respect and care for all things upon the earth. No matter how busy or involved you are in something, stop and think about how your actions will affect those around you. Pay attention to what people are saying and doing, including their facial expressions and body language. Getting attuned with what others are thinking and feeling can lead you to be more considerate of them as you go about your daily activities.

Before you act or speak, think about it. “How would I feel if people treated me the way I treat them?” Leaving a mess for others to clean up, or arriving late to a meeting causes inconvenience in others' lives and makes them feel like you don't care. Smiling at people and acting courteously are great ways to show people that you DO care. Caring people promote positive relationships. It's okay to voice your concerns if you are having a problem in a relationship or a situation. But do so in a caring, kind manner. Be quick to apologize if you've hurt someone.

By paying attention to others, we are less likely to act selfishly and more likely to be responsive to their needs. When we quit worrying about ourselves, we start noticing when someone else needs help. Selflessness allows real compassion and empathy to happen. It is easy to focus only on your own goals and desires, but your days will be far more rewarding if you turn some of your energy and ideas into making a difference in someone else's life.

In a thoughtful and kind way, ask people about their lives. Make an effort to learn about a neighbor or friend, and how they are doing. People who are caring take time to really listen to others. When someone is talking to you, make eye contact, put away your phone or other distractions, and don't interrupt the person. Really try to understand and be sympathetic to their needs and concerns.

Another way to be caring is to check in with people, let them know you are thinking about

them. Whether it's through sending a text or card, or a friendly phone call, your kindness will make a bright spot in their day. Maybe you are just returning a kind favor someone did for you. A caring person also notices and is appreciative of the family and friends who are or have been supportive in their past. If a friend has done something meaningful for you, thank them! Let them know that their presence really does matter in your life.

*"It is one of the most beautiful compensations of this life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself."* ~Ralph Waldo Emerson, poet, philosopher (1803-1882)

One important attribute of a caring person is that they are generous with their time, money, and talents. We all have busy schedules, but it is important to make the time to donate your things, do favors for people in need, or just to compliment a person close to you. Giving money is one way to be generous, but caring people usually have more to offer than just money. Sharing really is caring, and we all have something we can offer no matter our age or circumstance. Be on the lookout for opportunities to improve a person's life by sharing things, whether it is a material object, or a certain knowledge or skill. If you want to be a more caring person, then you should be willing to share the things you actually care about, not just your castaways.

Volunteering is a major way to be more caring. Whether it is running errands for a friend, shoveling snow for a neighbor, or babysitting for a family member, a caring person is willing to take action without expecting anything in return. Be on the lookout for people in your community who are less fortunate or need extra help. Though you don't want to spread yourself too thin, sometimes the greatest joy can come from doing a favor for someone you don't know that well! Find something that you can be passionate about. Get involved by sharing your time and energy at the local library, soup kitchen, youth program, senior citizens group, or in other programs in your area. You'll become more caring when you focus on ways you can improve other people's lives.

Actions can speak louder than words. A hug, squeeze, or pat on the back are gentle ways to give affection to someone you care about. Hugs can be very powerful and can bring comfort to people in need. By giving generously in all senses of the word, without forgetting about yourself, you are becoming a more caring person.

*"By compassion we make others' misery our own, and so, by relieving them, we relieve ourselves also."*

~ Sir Thomas Browne, British physician, philosopher (1605-1682)

This leader's guide on "Caring" was prepared by Susan Gartrell, KAFCE State EPC

**Educational goals:**

Learn what caring means, and words and actions that show caring.

Learn to recognize opportunities where we can be more caring to others.

**Community Action:**

Present and encourage 4<sup>th</sup> graders to participate in the Art and Essay contest.

Encourage other students and organizations to incorporate caring-character building activities.

Present lesson to your group, and as a group get involved helping others in need.

**References:**

Caring Character Counts Pamphlet

website: [charactercounts.org](http://charactercounts.org)

website: [www.wikihow.com/Be-Caring](http://www.wikihow.com/Be-Caring)

"The Lion and the Mouse." from Aesops Fables