



# ***Character Development: Kindness & Caring***

## ***for Pre-K and Kindergarten***

*Starfall Character Development is a supplementary program to implement throughout the school year in order to foster positive social interactions and create a warm and welcoming learning environment.*



**This module is an excerpt from the Starfall Character Development Program.**

If you have questions or comments, please contact us.

**Email:** [helpdesk@starfall.com](mailto:helpdesk@starfall.com) **Phone:** 1-888-857-8990 or 303-417-6414 **Fax:** 1-800-943-6666 or 303-417-6434



# **Character Development:** **Kindness & Caring**

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**Starfall Education Foundation** P.O. Box 359, Boulder, CO 80306 U.S.A.

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*Special thanks to Pamela Ferguson and Stephanie Riess, primary authors of this program.*

# Kindness & Caring

## Thinking of Others, Random Acts of Kindness, Sharing, Empathy, Compassion

Although young children may be gentle and loving by nature, developmentally it is normal for them to be basically egocentric. Therefore, they require assistance in learning to recognize the needs of others. The activities in the Kindness & Caring module were developed to assist children in becoming more aware that they should consider the feelings of others, share, perform acts of kindness, and show empathy and compassion.

Scientific studies show that kindness has both physical and emotional benefits, and that children need the positive feelings demonstrating and receiving kindness bring in order to thrive as happy and healthy individuals. Encouraging children to be kind can also have positive effects on their self-esteem.

Young children learn by example, so be sure to find frequent opportunities to demonstrate how to show kindness to others. Teaching kindness and compassion fosters the kinds of positive behaviors that lead to warm and welcoming environments. Effects of bullying can also be reduced significantly by focusing on integrating kindness.

### Book Suggestions

- *Be Polite and Kind* by Cheri J. Meiners
- *Be Kind* by Pat Zeitlow Miller
- *Children's Book on Kindness and Manners: "Little Dino Says Please"* by Kate Melton
- *I Share* by Cheri J. Meiners
- *Kindness is Cooler, Mrs. Ruler!* by Margery Cuyler
- *Ordinary Mary's Extraordinary Deed* by Emily Pearson
- *Strictly No Elephants* by Lisa Mantchev
- *The Kindness Quilt* by Nancy Elizabeth Wallace
- *What Does It Mean to Be Kind?* by Rana DiOrio

### Starfall Online Activities

- *Starfall.com*: Sing-Along Volume 2, "The More We Get Together"
- *Starfall.com*: Talking Library,
  - "Stone Soup"
  - "The Cobbler and the Elves"
- *Starfall.com*: I'm Reading, Chinese Fables,
  - "One Rice Thousand Gold"
- *Starfall.com*: I'm Reading, Folk Tales,
  - "The Four Friends"
  - "Mr. Bunny's Carrot Soup"

### Starfall Books & Media

- Writing & Observation Journals
- *Stone Soup* as told by Brandi Chase
- *The Cobbler and the Elves* as told by Brandi Chase
- Dragon
- Emotions Poster

## Lessons

### *Community Outreach Acts of Kindness (Monthly Activities)*

#### Materials

Items

#### Social/Emotional Development

*Expresses concern for  
the needs of others*

*Persists at individual  
planned experiences,  
caregiver-directed  
experiences and planned  
group activities*

*Shows kindness to others*

Plan a monthly community outreach project with the children and their parents. Each month, decide on a way the children can show kindness and caring for people in their community.

Suggestions:

- **September**—Talk about giving and how sometimes we give something to someone even though we want to keep it for ourselves. Ask children to make a list of toys and books from their classroom that they would like to give to a younger class in the school. From that list, the children choose one toy and one book to present as a “Welcome to School” gift to a younger class.
- **October**—Invite firefighters to your school. Prepare cupcakes or other treats, and a large thank you card for the firefighters to post in their fire station. Wrap up the treats and present them to the firefighters as a thank you for their service.
- **November**—Make a list of community helpers for whom you are grateful, such as police officers, doctors, nurses, postal workers, veterinarians, bus drivers, dentists, etc. Have children work in pairs to create thank you cards for them. If possible, take a field trip to the post office to mail their cards.
- **December**—Plan a small party for another class in your school. Decide on and prepare a snack, sing songs, or lead age-appropriate games for a younger class.
- **January**—Discuss people who have no homes and have to live outside. Ask parents to help the children find old blankets or jackets at home that they can bring to school to donate to a homeless shelter.
- **February**—Choose a nursing home near your school. Discuss how important these homes are in taking care of older people who need extra help. Invite the children to make valentines for the residents. If possible, plan a field trip to the nursing home to deliver the cards and sing songs to the residents.
- **March**—Contact an organization that collects and distributes food to poor people in the community, and organize a food drive. Partner your children with older children at your school to create posters promoting a canned and dried food drive in the school, and post them throughout the school or center.

It is advised to do this during a month other than November and December since traditionally many people donate food during these months.

- **April**—“Build a Sock” Make a list of things that homeless people might need such as toothbrushes, toothpaste, combs, deodorant, soap, shampoo, etc. Send a list of these items and a note home with the children asking parents/guardians to create jobs for children in order for them to earn money to buy a few of these items. Include one pair of tube socks for men. Once the donations have come in, children sort the items into groups. “Ball” one sock and stuff it inside the other sock in the pair, and fill the sock with one item from each category. Children may create illustrations to add to the socks. Tie the socks together with ribbon and deliver them to a homeless shelter or ministry.
- **May**—Plan a surprise unbirthday or thank you party for your principal or director. The children can create cards or flowers, or they may cook or prepare a special snack. You may also prepare a shared writing on chart paper thanking your director or principal for a great school year. Invite him or her to your classroom to share a snack. Have the children present cards and sing songs.

**Let’s Be Kind**

Instruct the children to close their eyes and listen to the following story.

- Once there was a group of children who came to school. They said hello to each other, played together, had snack together, and had lots of fun together. One day, two new children joined the class. They were from another country and didn’t speak English. Their names were Angelo and Nadia.

Pretend Angelo and Nadia came to our class. Think of some kind things we could do for them to help them feel welcome and included as part of our class. Indicate the chart paper and tell the children you will write their ideas.

If the children have difficulty thinking of acts of kindness, have Dragon whisper one to you, share it with the class, then write it on the chart paper.

Explain to the children that these are called “Acts of Kindness” because they are kind things we can do to help our new friends feel welcome.

<b>Materials</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dragon
<input type="checkbox"/>	Chart paper
<input type="checkbox"/>	Marker

**Social/Emotional Development**

*Expresses common courtesy and respects the rights of others (Says please, thank you, helps a friend, shares, etc.)*

*Expresses concern for the needs of others*

*Shows kindness to others*

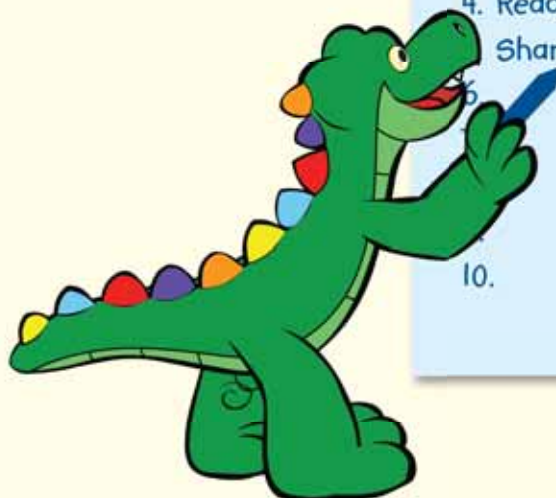
**Ways to show kindness**

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1. Sit next to them.
2. Share a toy with them.
3. Help them clean up.
4. Read a book with them.

Share a snack.

10.



**Kindness Chain****Social/Emotional  
Development**

*Expresses common courtesy and respects the rights of others (Says please, thank you, helps a friend, shares, etc.)*

*Expresses concern for the needs of others*

*Takes the perspective of others and responds appropriately*

*Shows kindness to others*

Engage the children in creating a list of acts of kindness they can perform for each other (or use the list from the previous "Let's Be Kind" activity). Dragon may make some suggestions to get the list started or contribute to the list at any time.

Suggestions:

- Hold the door for someone.
- Compliment someone or their drawing.
- Play with someone who is alone.
- Let someone in front of you in line.
- Draw a picture for someone who is sad.
- Offer to clean up for someone.
- Push in someone's chair.
- Offer to give someone a hug. (Be sure you ask first!)
- Give someone a nice pat on the back gently.

**Ongoing Activity**

Explain that when you or a classmate notices someone performing an act of kindness, that child will get a "kindness strip." He or she will write his or her name and decorate the strip.

As children decorate strips, they loop them to the other strips. Dragon and/or an assistant can do acts of kindness as an example, and demonstrate how to decorate strips and attach them to begin a chain. Find a low place in your classroom to display the chain for easy access.

**Materials**

- |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Strips of lightly colored paper about 1 inch wide and 10 inches long (as many as possible) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Large resealable plastic bags to hold the strips   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Container of pencils, crayons, markers   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Chart paper, markers   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Dragon   |



**“One Rice Thousand Gold”**

Navigate to *Starfall.com: I’m Reading, Chinese Fables, “One Rice Thousand Gold.”* Explain that the story you will read takes place in a country far away called China. Locate China on a map or globe. Children share what they know about Chinese people and their culture.

Read and discuss “One Rice Thousand Gold.” Volunteers share times they were really hungry and how they felt when someone gave them something to eat. Review how in the story the old woman gave Han-Shin something to eat because he was hungry and what Han-Shin did to thank her.

Lead the children in a discussion about being more aware of the needs of those around us and ways we can thank people for doing kind things for us.

Challenge them to think of something nice their mom, dad, brother, or sister has done for them, such as having washed their clothes, prepared dinner, played with them, taught them something, etc.

The children think of someone they would like to thank for being kind or for doing something nice. They illustrate and think of a special message they would like to share with that person. Write their messages under their illustrations. The children take them home to give to the special person.

<b>Materials</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Starfall.com: I’m Reading, Chinese Fables, “One Rice Thousand Gold”

**Social/Emotional Development**

*Demonstrates understanding and acceptance of similarities and differences in others*

*Expresses common courtesy and respects the rights of others (Says please, thank you, helps a friend, shares, etc.)*

*Expresses concern for the needs of others*

*Recognizes and identifies feelings and emotions of characters in stories or real life situations*

*Recognizes the emotions of peers and responds with empathy and compassion*



**Words Are Like a Tube of Toothpaste**

Partner the children carefully and provide each pair of children with one paper plate and one small tube of toothpaste. Tell the partners to take turns using the toothpaste to create a beautiful picture on the paper plate. Some children may be hesitant to participate. Encourage them to try something new and have their partners assist in getting them to participate.

After an appropriate amount of time, signal the children to put down the tube of toothpaste. Volunteers share what they created. Explain that you have a problem for them to solve. The partners will need to work together to put ALL of the toothpaste BACK into the tubes. Give the children some time to try to do this.

<b>Materials</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	One small tube of colorful toothpaste for every two children
<input type="checkbox"/>	One paper plate for every two children
<input type="checkbox"/>	Two sheets of chart paper, marker
<input type="checkbox"/>	Paper towels or baby wipes

**Approaches to Learning**

*Demonstrates increasing independence and willingness to try new challenges*

**Social/Emotional Development**

*Begins to understand that actions have consequences*

*Takes the perspective of others and responds appropriately*

Signal the children to stop, and volunteers share their experiences. Help the children understand that the lesson they can learn from this activity is that words are like toothpaste. Assist the children in understanding the importance of not letting unkind words come out of their mouths because they are hurtful to others and can never be taken back.

- Words come out of our mouths easily, but what if those words were mean?
- Would we want those words to stay out?
- How do you think the other person feels when they hear those words?
- Discuss how we would want to take those words back or wish we never said them. But just like putting the toothpaste back into the tube was very hard, once our words come out, we can never really take them back.

The children assist to clean up the toothpaste experiment.

Indicate a sheet of chart paper, and volunteers offer hurtful words they would want to take back or that could hurt others and you list their responses. Indicate a second sheet of chart paper and list the children's responses as they think of kind words they should use instead.

When the lists are complete, ask the children which list they would prefer to keep. Display the list of kind words and have the children help crumple up the hurtful words list and place it in the recycle bin as a way of getting these words out of their classroom.

### **"Stone Soup" and the Talking Stone**

Indicate a large stone and tell the children it is a special stone called a Talking Stone! Explain that long ago Native Americans used a Talking Stick or Talking Stone when they shared stories or ideas as a group. It helped people listen more carefully to each other. Here's how it works. When someone is talking, he or she holds the stone. The person holding the stone shares and the rest of the group will be quiet listeners until the person is finished. When the person is finished, he or she hands the stone to someone else to share.

Ask if the children think it is okay to throw the stone. Explain that it is not okay to throw the stone because it could hurt someone. The children practice passing the stone gently to each other.

Indicate *Stone Soup* while holding the stone, and explain that the title of the book is *Stone Soup* and the story was retold by Brandi Chase. Discuss the cover and ask the children what they notice about how the people are dressed. They should understand that the illustration on the cover is a clue that the story took place a long time ago in a little village or neighborhood. People who lived in villages were called villagers.

Read *Stone Soup*, pausing to discuss the story. When you are finished reading, volunteers share something they remember from the story, holding the stone as they share.

#### **Materials**

- Stone Soup* as told by Brandi Chase
- One large stone

#### **Health, Safety & Environment**

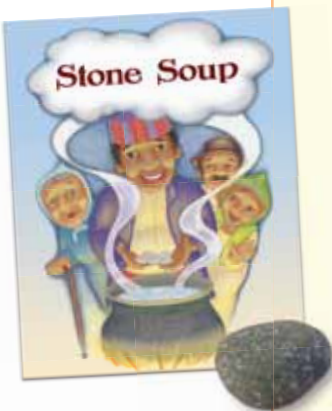
Consistently follows basic safety rules independently

Identifies consequences of not following safety rules

#### **Social/Emotional Development**

Manages and exhibits behavioral control with or without adult support

Shows kindness to others





Take back the stone and tell the children that as you read the story, you asked yourself how the visitor could make soup from stones. Then you realized that he wanted to trick the villagers into sharing their food by pretending to be able to make soup from stones. Explain that you will read the story again and they should listen to hear if anything good came from his trick.

Read *Stone Soup* again, then ask the following questions. Pass the Talking Stone to children who wish to share.

- Why didn't the villagers want to share their food?
- What made them change their minds?
- What good thing happened to the villagers when they shared their food?

Allow time for the children to ask questions about the story and discuss times they shared, even if reluctantly, with their friends and families and how it made them feel.

### **The Cobbler and the Elves (2 Day Plan)**

#### **Day 1**

Read *The Cobbler and the Elves* as retold by Brandi Chase, and discuss the following questions with the children:

- How do you think the cobbler and his wife felt when they realized they didn't have any more leather to make shoes?
- How might the cobbler and his wife have felt that first morning when they saw the shoes were finished?
- How do you think the elves felt helping the cobbler and his wife?
- How might the elves have felt when they saw their new clothes?
- How do you feel when someone does something nice for you?

Indicate the chart paper. Explain that volunteers will think of kind things they can do for each other at school or things they can do for their families at home, and you will list them on the chart paper. Have Dragon offer the first few suggestions and write them on the chart paper.

**Note:** If you have already created a list of kind things the children can do for each other or their families, consider adding to your list instead of creating another one.

Suggestions:

- Clean up litter on the playground.
- Help a friend clean up or organize supplies.
- Let someone go in front of you in line

<b>Materials</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Slips of paper with Acts of Kindness printed on them
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>The Cobbler and the Elves</i> as told by Brandi Chase
<input type="checkbox"/>	Writing & Observation Journals
<input type="checkbox"/>	Chart paper, marker
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pencils, crayons
<input type="checkbox"/>	Kindness Jar
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dragon

#### **Social/Emotional Development**

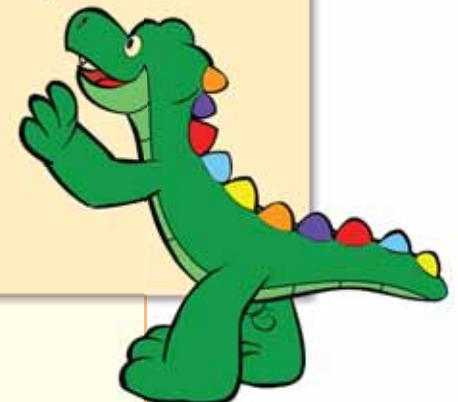
*Recognizes and identifies feelings and emotions of characters in stories or real life situations*

*Shows kindness to others*

*Takes the perspective of others and responds appropriately*

**How can I help out at home?**

1. Set the table
2. Clean up my room
3. Help to cook dinner
4. Pick up toys
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.





- Do what you are asked to do at home the first time.
- Hold the door open for the person behind you.
- Say please and thank you.
- Let a friend borrow your crayons.
- Be a helper to your teacher.
- Draw a picture for your mom or dad or grandparent.
- Ask someone to play with you.

### Day 2

Transfer the acts of kindness, plus additional children’s acts of kindness ideas from Day 1, onto individual strips of paper and place them in a “Kindness Jar.”

Indicate the Kindness Jar and explain that there are ideas for doing kind things for each other in the jar. Each day you will choose a volunteer to draw an act of kindness from the jar. Encourage the children to perform that act of kindness for a classmate or someone at home.

Distribute the Writing & Observation Journals, pencils, and crayons. The children each choose an act of kindness from the chart paper list, illustrate, and write about that act of kindness.

Encourage the children to share their entries and illustrations with each other.

### Change the World

Discuss how people like Martin Luther King, Jr. and many others worked very hard to make the world a peace-filled place to live. He taught us how to love each other, get along with one another, and to work together.

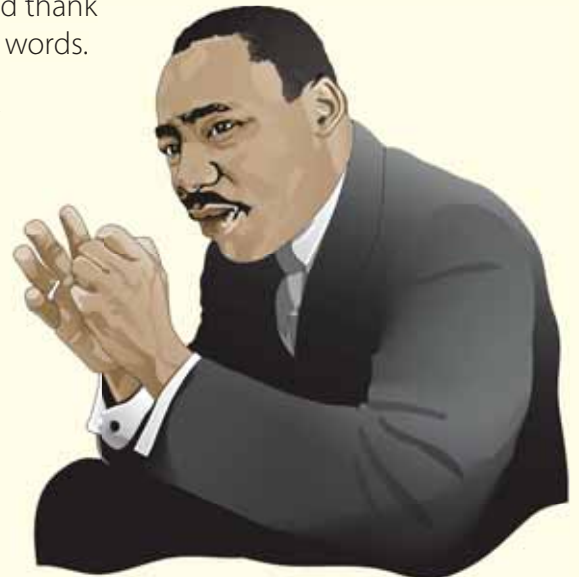
Volunteers suggest behaviors that help make the classroom a peaceful, loving place to learn, like smiling, holding doors for others, saying please and thank you, giving a hug, sharing, and using kind words.

Distribute Writing & Observation Journals, pencils, and crayons and the children illustrate people demonstrating peaceful behaviors. They use scribble writing or inventive spelling to write about their illustrations. Circulate to do adult writing and compliment them on their efforts.

Encourage the children to practice using kind words and actions today. Use this opportunity to also discuss bullying and proper responses.

#### Materials

- Photos of Martin Luther King, Jr. and other people who have worked to promote peace
- Writing & Observation Journals
- Pencils, crayons



#### Social/Emotional Development

*Expresses common courtesy and respects the rights of others (Says please, thank you, helps a friend, shares, etc.)*

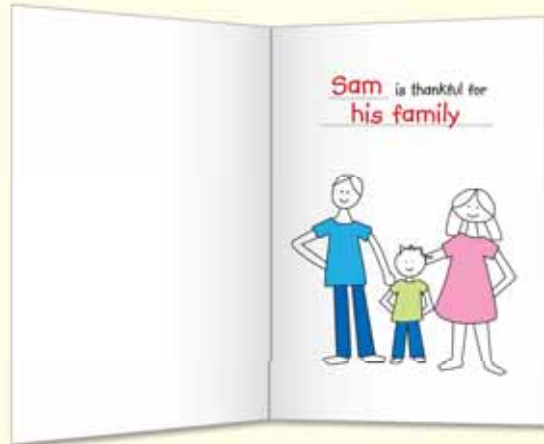
*Shows kindness to others*

**"Giving Thanks" Class Book**

The children think of people and things they are thankful for, and illustrate them. Each child's page might read: "\_\_\_\_\_ is thankful for \_\_\_\_\_." Example: "Jeffrey is thankful for friends."

Insert each paper into a plastic sleeve and place them in a binder to form a class book. The children take turns to read their pages to the class and share their illustrations. The children compliment each presenter after he or she has shared.

<b>Materials</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Drawing paper
<input type="checkbox"/>	Plastic sleeves
<input type="checkbox"/>	Crayons
<input type="checkbox"/>	Binder



**Approaches to Learning**

Attends to tasks for brief periods of time

**Social/Emotional Development**

Engages in agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others and taking turns speaking about the topics and texts under discussion)

Recognizes preferences of others

**The Kindness Circle**

Gather the children to sit in a circle on a rug or the floor. Explain that one way of being kind is to notice people around us and to compliment them on their good behavior or how nice they look.

Roll the ball gently to the child on your right and compliment that child, saying something like, I like the way you are sitting quietly or I like the way your hair looks today, etc. That child rolls the ball to the person on his or her right and pays him or her a compliment. Encourage the children to think of a variety of qualities they could compliment and to respond to the compliments by saying "thank you." Repeat until each of the children has a turn to give and receive a compliment.

Repeat the game when time allows, and encourage the children to compliment something different each time.

<b>Materials</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ball

**Approaches to Learning**

Demonstrates increasing independence and willingness to try new challenges

**Social/Emotional Development**

Shows kindness to others

**Book Hospital**

Discuss the proper way to handle books and why it's important to handle books carefully and gently.

Indicate a damaged book and demonstrate how to locate the damage. Ask the children what they might do to repair the book or why they should not just throw the book away. Explain that we are all responsible for taking care of our things.

Encourage the children to put any damaged books into the "Book Hospital." Then ask them for suggestions as to how the books might be repaired. If possible, repair the books. The children then place the books back on the shelf or wherever they are stored.

<b>Materials</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Basket labeled "Book Hospital"
<input type="checkbox"/>	Damaged books from home or the classroom

**Health, Safety & Environment**

Understands the use of natural resources and demonstrates environmental awareness and responsibility (e.g., reduce, reuse, recycle)

**Social/Emotional Development**

Recognizes and accepts responsibilities

### Thanksgiving Cards and Food Donation

#### Materials

Chart paper, marker

#### Social/Emotional Development

*Engages independently in simple social problem solving including offering potential solutions and reflecting on the appropriateness of the solution*

*Expresses concern for the needs of others*

*Shows kindness to others*

Discuss with the children that there are many people who aren't able to celebrate Thanksgiving in the traditional way for a variety of reasons (illness, living alone, lack of money). Ask them to think about what they could do to solve this problem for some people like these in your community.

List their ideas on chart paper. Assist the children to reflect on the appropriateness of their suggestions. Lead them to conclude that they can create cards to help cheer people up. Consider sending their cards along with food donations to local soup kitchens or food banks.

### Home and Community Kindness Suggestions

#### Materials

None

#### Approaches to Learning

*Demonstrates increasing independence and willingness to try new challenges*

#### Social/Emotional Development

*Shows kindness to others*

Provide a list of home/community activities that promote kindness and caring for the children and their parents or caregivers.

- Volunteer at an animal shelter.
- Volunteer at a food bank or soup kitchen.
- Create an outside bird feeder.
- Visit an elderly relative, neighbor or nursing home.
- Make a family kindness jar.
- Write letters to service members and/or veterans.
- Donate gently-used toys and blankets to those in need.
- Bake treats for local firefighters.
- Greet the mail carrier.
- Sweep a neighbor's driveway.
- Hold the door for the person behind you.
- Compliment a friend, neighbor or family member.

