

# Making Your Imprint on Children with Small Acts of Kindness

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Welcome to our first blog. Our sisterhood of grandma educators created this blog to share successful parenting strategies with families, grandparents, and friends that can make an incredible impact on the lives of

children in their healthy growth, cognitive and academic development, and overall happiness. We are active grandmas who regularly babysit and play with our grandchildren and help in schools and community programs. I play with my six year old granddaughter and nine year old grandson several days a month in addition to providing weekly care for my two six month old twin granddaughters and a three year old grandson. My life is rewardingly full as I am able to care and contribute to the healthy growth of my cherished grandchildren.



As a credentialed parent educator, I wanted to partner with diverse educators to create a blog that would provide guidance and encouragement to parents, grandparents, and their families who are eager to learn how to support their children's healthy growth. We also want to share effective parenting strategies and educational activities from various cultures and lifestyles to ensure a holistic representation for our readers. Finally, we recognize that many parents and family members will not have access to this blog because they do not own a computer or have an electronic device with website access. We are hoping that our readers will print and share relevant blogs with community organizations, schools, and churches that serve families in need of parenting support. Most of our work with challenged families has been in schools where we have been able to personally help parents through parent education classes, academic enrichment workshops, and playful activity time while demonstrating how play is learning for children.

I believe encouraging stressed out parents when their children are acting out is the greatest gift I have shared with families throughout my career. The first time I tried this approach was in a grocery store when a mother was yelling at her child for misbehaving. As I approached the mother, I commented on how darling her child was and the mother immediately relaxed, smiled, and looked at her child lovingly. These words of encouragement broke her parent-child power struggle and the mom and child were able to happily complete their shopping trip. I cannot count how many times that I have left the grocery store with a full shopping cart because one of my children did not cooperate and instead started to pull random groceries off the store shelves.



As a grandma, I happily shop with my grandchildren when they are well rested and we have a wonderful time selecting appropriate groceries for meal planning. My older grandchildren review the nutritional value of a couple of food items and compare which has the most fat, sodium, and other unhealthy ingredients. We also conduct a price analysis to determine the best value for the

price. We discuss which product tastes the best or will produce the greatest satisfaction as this is an important factor to consider when comparison shopping. When purchasing produce, my grandchildren note the cost per pound of a specific vegetable or fruit. They will then weigh each type of fruit or vegetable and calculate the approximate cost for each. After the food is purchased, the grandchildren can compare the final cost to their projected cost of various produce items.

When I babysit my older grandchildren for several days, we plan our meals, prepare a shopping list, shop for various food items, prepare the meals together, and discuss fractional conversions when preparing recipes while cooking. As a child becomes experienced in grocery shopping, he or she can walk through the store to search and select specific food items to buy. Middle school students can create the weekly family shopping list and then shop for the family when using a predetermined budget. This was actually my weekly chore when I was a middle school student. This activity prepared me for nutritional meal planning while using a fixed food budget. It reinforced my literacy and math skills. I also learned about the sociological impact of food displays in stores while shopping with various cultural groups. I used science to evaluate healthy food choices and modify family recipes based on available seasonal produce.

I have expanded my small acts of kindness beyond grocery shopping and regularly complement parents on their incredible patience when their child is distressed. For example, I will comment on how cooperative and mature a

child is while walking next to their parent even if the child is acting up. This focus on the positive can have an immediate favorable impact on the interaction between parent and child. My goal in these exchanges is to redirect the negative behavior and minimize stress.

Please share your own acts of kindness that have left a positive imprint on a child or parent on this blog.

With loving support of our children and families,

Mary Ann

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