

Powerful Relationship Advice to Use Anywhere, Anytime

I remember a season in our home when our kids were little where two of our kids were getting into fairly regular fights. I—like any normal mother—wanted my kids to get along, and I wanted them to “be nice” to each other. I established the rule that if you got into a fight with your siblings, you would have to be “best friends” with that sib for 24 hours until you could get along. During that 24-hour period, you wouldn’t be allowed to play with your friends, and you’d even have to sleep in the same room with the sibling you were at odds with. Looking back, my kids laugh about that rule, and one of my daughters distinctly remembers that for a season she slept on her brother’s bottom bunk more than in her own bed because of fights.

Childish arguments are one thing, but as adults—especially as adults who follow Jesus—our attitude is to be Christlike. The apostle Paul wrote that we’re to “prefer one another in honor” (Rom. 12:10b). Another way of saying that is this: Just. Be. Nice.

So how can you just be nice this week? Here are a few ideas:

Assume the best. Imagine for a moment that a coworker disappoints you. Rather than presuming the worst about that person, assume the best. Or if your husband gets stuck at work late, don’t suppose he’s just trying to skip dinner or avoid you, assume the best. Some might wonder, *Is it naïve to assume the best about others?* No, I don’t think so. Assuming the best keeps you positive until someone proves you wrong. So once a person has let you down—then what?

Don’t cast others in a negative light. The psalmist David writes that the person who is righteous doesn’t utter any

slander, “does no evil to his neighbor, nor bears a reproach against his friend” (Ps. 15:3b). We’re living in a culture where it’s acceptable to slam others on Facebook and to criticize and make fun of others publicly and privately. But as followers of Jesus, we are to be counter-cultural. Don’t tear others down; instead, build them up.

Listen and value other people’s ideas. Even when you don’t agree, take the time to listen. Listen specifically for something you can agree with and capitalize on that. Everyone wants to feel heard and valued. Listen without planning what you’ll say next. Allow the other to completely finish their thought before you dive in with your ideas or shoot theirs down.

Keep your promises. When you make a promise, whether to your spouse, your kids, or your co-workers, keep your promise. Psalm 15:4 (NIV) says that the one who is righteous “keeps an oath even when it hurts.” In other words, the one who is kind keeps his promise even when it’s inconvenient.

Live generously. Finally, if you want to be nice this week—live generously. Lend money and even give to those who are poor. A few weeks ago, my daughter Stefanie bought a homeless family a meal and prayed over them. Her own kids (7, 5 and 20 months) were watching. The 7 and the 5-year-old were both praying in their car seats while their Mama was praying. The kids learned an important lesson that day about living generously. Throughout Scripture, God instructs His people to take care of the poor. It’s a simple way to be nice.

Hey, I hope you have a nice week! I’d love to hear from you—how are you trying to live a counter-cultural life of just being nice? Leave a comment and share your ideas! {eoa}

Becky Harling, an author, certified speaker, leadership coach and trainer with the John Maxwell Team, is an energetic and motivational international speaker inspiring audiences to

overcome their greatest life challenges and reach their full God-given potential. Her most recent book is How to Listen So People Will Talk. Her husband, Steve Harling, is the president of Reach Beyond, a nonprofit organization seeking to be the voice and hands of Jesus around the world. Connect with Becky at , Facebook or Twitter.

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