

Tips for Parents by Susie Kohl

Catching Children In Acts of Kindness

“**W**HAT MADE YOU DO THAT?” I asked a five-year-old boy who had “written” an apology note to a girl in our class. She had accused him of hurting her feelings by asserting that she wasn’t right about a fact she had stated. When I asked his motivation for dictating the apology, the boy just smiled broadly. “Was it your heart that made you do it?” I asked. He nodded yes, still beaming from the girl’s positive reaction and my delight.

Previously, the girl had demanded a verbal apology for trying to prove her wrong. He had refused, continuing his drawing. Putting his apology on paper was his idea. When he handed it to the girl, he offered, “It says, ‘Sorry.’” When she looked pleased, he amended, “It says, ‘I love you.’”

The act of doing something nice often evokes loving feelings that might not have been present during a conflict. For example, the husband who buys his wife flowers, even though he still feels resentful, often lets go of those feelings when handing her the bouquet.

As parents and teachers, we have the chance to notice a child’s kind act with appreciation. We know that catching them in the act of being nice encourages consideration in the future. Our comments also give children the chance to stop and notice what it feels like when their hearts open to someone else. Usually, that joy feels so much better than being right during the argument.

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