I Choose To Be Gentle

"Gentleness is moving wisely, touching softly, holding carefully, speaking quietly and thinking kindly. When you feel mad or hurt, use your self-control. Instead of harming someone, talk things out peacefully. You are making the world a safer, gentler place." *The Family Virtues Guide*

The above definition can be used as a conversation guide to help children understand more about the practice of gentleness in their everyday life. An example of such conversation is given below. Practical demonstrations and role playing can also be integrated into the conversation.

"Let me move wisely"

Gentleness is learning to control our bodies, so that we can move through the world with grace. Practicing fluid movements, breathing slowly, and stretching our limbs regularly puts us in touch with our bodies. When we become conscious of our bodily activity, we understand the difference between movement and stillness. Moving wisely is knowing when to move, and when to be still.

"Let me touch softly."

Hands are our little helpers. We use them to carry out our daily activities. We need our hands to practice many virtues, like helpfulness, cleanliness, and patience. We use them to show love, by shaking hands, and giving hugs. When we use our hands to touch softly, we are practicing gentleness. We can softly arrange flowers in a glass vase, pour a cup of tea, and stroke an animal. Touching things softly is a sign of our care, and it helps us preserve the things we love. We show our love for the gifts we receive by the softness of our touch.

"Let me hold carefully, speak quietly and think kindly."

When mommies hold their sweet babies, and whisper softly into their tiny ears, they are being gentle. Gentleness is especially important when we are around babies and animals. Their small bodies need us to be careful when we hold them, and their tiny ears are sensitive to the loudness or softness of our voice. When we are careful, think kind thoughts, and express ourselves with kind words, we are practicing gentleness.

"I use my self-control."

Knowing when to stop is using self-control. In anything we do, we can stop, think, and then act. We let kind thoughts guide our actions. We use the power of our mind to control our emotions, wants and desires. When we use self-

control, we take only what we need. We use moderation in what we eat, how we dress, and what we say.

"I talk things out peacefully."

Kind speech means using our words to say how we feel, whether we are happy, mad, or hurting. We are careful about what we say and control our tone of voice. Talking things out peacefully means putting ourselves in the position of the other person. We see their perspective, and respect their feelings. We use consultation to come to an agreement when we have different opinions.

"I make the world a safer, gentler place."

Choosing to be gentle creates a feeling of peacefulness in our hearts. When we feel peaceful, we can think clearly, and make safe choices. If someone hurts us, we can respond with care and protect ourselves and others from harm. We can show through our deeds that we care about the world and all living things. We become peacemakers when we practice gentleness with our bodies, our thoughts, our words, and our actions.

Now we know there are many ways to practice gentleness. Let's review with a list, I'll give some examples, and you fill in the blanks:

I choose to be gentle at school when I talk things out peacefully with my friend.

I choose to be _____ at home when I _____.

I choose to be gentle with my body when I walk around the school softly.

I choose to be _____ with my hands when I _____.

I choose to be gentle with my thoughts by forgiving a person who hurt me.

I choose to be _____ with my words by _____.

I choose to be gentle by using my self-control to take 1 cookie from the plate at a time.

I choose to be _____ by using my self-control to _____.

I choose to make the world a safer place by making my actions agree with my words.

I choose to make the world a gentler place by making my _____ agree with my _____.

by Zaynab Twaddell
For the Children's Virtues Development Project