

For more tolerant adults, educate preschoolers

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Credit: Florida International University

It seems that nowadays simple disagreements quickly escalate to ugly, bitter disputes in all kinds of relationships.

That's no way to head into one of the sweetest, heartfelt holidays of the year, said Angela Salmon, an associate professor of [early childhood education](#).

The best way to diffuse rude behavior, she says, is to help [children](#)

manage impulsivity and build skills that allow them to listen, understand and feel empathy. If started while children are in preschool, Salmon adds, these attributes could help them maintain healthy and happy relationships as adults.

"I think everything starts in childhood with all the values that children are taught," Salmon said. "If children see adults who respect each other, they will follow that model."

With Valentine's Day here, Salmon shares these the top three habits parents and teachers can use to raise tolerant, conscientious children.

1. Learn to listen with understanding and empathy

Too often, adults are waiting for someone to finish speaking so they can share their thoughts Salmon said. Teachers should build-in opportunities for children to practice listening with understanding and empathy. Just the simple act of having a child restate what a classmate told them in their own words helps them build this skill.

2. Thinking interdependently while building tolerance

Not everyone will agree all the time, Salmon said. However, children are inquisitive and they can learn to appreciate different points of view with a little help from their teachers. By guiding children so they explain their views, it will help both children understand why they have a difference of opinion.

3. Manage impulsiveness

Children very often take their cues from their parents, Salmon said. If they see adults fly off the handle easily, children are likely to imitate that

behavior. Instead, children should learn to slow things down. Taking a breath before reacting to something a classmate said or did helps to cool tempers and prevent blow-ups, Salmon said.

Provided by Florida International University

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