



Faith at Home – October 2019

This comes from Traci Smith's *Faithful Families: Creating Sacred Moments at Home*.

Compassion – Secret Helpers Week

Awareness is central to compassion. Those with the ability to be compassionate are often very turned in to the needs of others. Like other skills, compassion can be learned and practiced. This simple family practice helps children not only recognize ways in which they can show compassion to other members of the family, but also allows them to experience acts of kindness and reflect how good it feels when someone helps them.

Designed for Ages 5+

Materials: None

Time Investment: 30 second-2 minute intervals throughout a week, plus a 30 minute sharing time at the end of the week.

How To

1. Explain to the family that for a period of one week, effective immediately, the family will be having a "Secret Helpers" week. Anytime someone sees a family member with a special need, he or she will make the special effort to go help that person, immediately, without being asked, and without expecting something in return. Because it is Secret Helpers Week, no family members will draw attention to what they are doing.
2. Throughout the week, parents and caregivers will vocalize little clues that help children remember the challenge for the week. "Wow, Daddy helped me carry the groceries in from the car; he's really paying attention to Secret Helpers Week," or "I can't wait to do something special for each of you tomorrow for Secret Helpers Week."
3. At the end of the week, have a conversation about the experience. Use the following questions as a guide:
 - *How did it feel to give special help to your family members this week?*
 - *Were there times that you did something special that your family members noticed: What about times that they didn't notice?*
 - *What things did others do for you this week?*
 - *Was it easy or hard to help family members?*
 - *Should we do this again? How often?*

Notes

- One of the limitations of this exercise is that it seems to imply that family members are only helping others out because of this special exercise. During the debriefing session, a parent can point this out by saying, *"It's nice to help each other out all the time, not just during the Secret Helpers Week."*
- Some children might benefit from a little (or a lot) of prompting and encouragement: *"Wow, it looks like Dad could use someone to hold that dustpan for him; may you would like it to be one of your*

jobs for Secret Helpers Week!" or "Your sister had a hard day at school, why don't you and I pick a flower from the garden and leave it in her room with a note? It will be a chance to participate in Secret Helpers Week."

Variations

- Try Secret Helper Days rather than weeks to get the family used to the idea.
- At the beginning of the week, have each family member draw a name of someone else in the family and have each person focus on helping the person whose name they draw. At the end of the week, try to guess who your helper was.
- Do this activity on a regular basis – every Monday, every 5th of the month, every March, etc.