

## Learning to Use Core Vocabulary – Kindness Rocks

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For children who use AAC, learning to use their core vocabulary to create messages is must extend beyond classroom or therapy activities. It is often challenging for parents and professionals to find creative and motivating ways to help children share information initiate use of the core outside a structured learning environment.

It was through a personal Facebook Friend that I *stumbled* upon the Kindness Rocks Project (<http://thekindnessrocksproject.com>). The project embraces some simple goals: #1 Inspire others through randomly placed rocks with messages about kindness; #2 Recruit others who stumble upon the rocks, to join the pursuit of inspiring others in the same way.

Wow, what a great activity this could be for teaching core words related to doing kind things, and get others involved who may or may not use AAC. Our AAC users can become ambassadors for kindness and improve their communication skills at the same time. By creating a rock that may contain a single word, phrase, or simple message (e.g., hug; help girl; give thanks; you are beautiful; smile, be happy), they can make someone else act or react and feel good. Searching for rocks may be something they enjoy especially when the message touches them or moves them to act.

So let the Kindness sharing begin ...

Basic rules of Project: Kindness Rocks!!!

By Megan Murphy

Adapted for AAC Users by Joan Bruno, Ph.D., CCC-SLP

- 1) Join this movement! ... Authentic Kindness easily comes with the “want to” activities, but not so much from the “have to” activities.
- 2) Chose the duration of your activity: a day, a weekend, a week, a month. Partner with a group to be the recipients of the kindness rocks. For children we want to insure success.
- 3) Select a location for a Kindness Rock Garden that others can visit
- 4) Collect some rocks, paints or colored markers, and/or symbol stickers.
- 5) Help the children to chose an “Act of Kindness); one they are able to express (e.g., hug; help girl; give thanks; you are beautiful; smile, be happy). You can reference the appropriate Gateway vocabulary Alpha Sort manuals (<http://www.gatewaytolanguageandlearning.com/resources/gateway-manuals/>) for ideas.
- 6) Use Aided-Language Stimulation to help the children formulate their messages.
- 7) Have each child select a rock and decorate it with his or her message.
- 8) “Plant” the rocks in the Kindness Garden and encourage the partner group to visit, express gratitude and pay it forward so that a circle of kindness will evolve.

You can share your experience on the “[www.projectkindnessrocks.com](http://www.projectkindnessrocks.com)” blog site, under the “Share Your Kindness Story” tab. It would be nice to read about your activities and to find out how many people have joined this Kindness movement. It would also be great to share your experience on the Gateway Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/JoanBrunoGateway/>.