

### (1) Snappy the Alligator

Snappy the alligator wasn't feeling like himself lately. His feet felt draggy and his skin felt baggy. His tail wouldn't swish this way and that. And worst of all his big jaw wouldn't snap.

"This is terrible! My jaw hurts and I can't go hunting. I am just hungry. I need to do something," said Snappy.

So Snappy went off in search of food. He walked along the edge of the pond. He scooted up the tall, tall hill. He went through the forest, looking for something small that he could eat, something like tiny little birds and soft, fuzzy bunnies. When he came to a grocery store, Snappy went inside. He looked at the other shoppers while loading his cart with pudding, peanut butter, pita bread, and popcorns.

Snappy, the big, mean, hungry alligator who only liked food that started with the letter P, carried his food back to the forest, back down the hill, back around the pond, until he got to a surprisingly lopsided shack, which is Snappy's house he'd built it himself. Snappy the alligator took his food into his tilted shed and stayed inside.

What was he doing in there? Was he making crafty plans? Was he roasting innocent forest creatures that he already had stored in his freezer? Had he fallen asleep? In fact, Snappy made himself a peanut butter sandwich like normal people; he was reading a book like normal people; and most of all, he was planning a party like normal people.

Snappy knew that most of the other forest animals were afraid of him. He tried to better his reputation with the other animals by showing them he's no threat at all. He decided to have a party and invite all the forest animals to come. He prepared pudding, cubes of cheese, fruits, popcorns and a big bowl of punch. He washed the

windows and the porch. He vacuumed the rug. He made goody bags, which everyone loves, for all his guests.

Snappy's party was shaping up to be quite a festive event. Colorful streamers hung from the ceiling. Some danceable music was playing. Snappy's friends started to come. Soon all the guests had arrived. They were laughing and dancing. They were eating and drinking. They were having a really good time.

To their surprise, one of the guests, the rooster, offered to show everyone how to do a proper Chicken Dance. All the guests danced with the rooster. While they were dancing, Snappy said to everyone with a big smile, "Does anyone love pudding? I prepare my favorite pudding and it's really good for you."

All the guests ate the pudding, drank the punch, and followed the rooster with the Chicken Dance. They knew that Snappy was not scary at all. In fact, he was friendly and nice, and posed no threat to anyone.

"Can we do this more often?" asked one of the guests. "We can share our food and have more parties like this," said the others. So they decided to have a party every week and their friendship started to grow.

**(2) Be Kind**

Tanya spilled grape juice all over her new dress yesterday. Everyone laughed at her new purple messy dripping dress. I did, too. But Mom always tells me to be kind, so I tried.

I said, "Purple is my favorite color." I thought Tanya would smile, but she ran into the hall instead. So I didn't think it worked. When she finally came back, snack time was over. She put on her art smock and didn't look at anyone nor talk to anyone.

I wanted to show my kindness and told Tanya that art was my favorite class, but I didn't, because I was afraid of her leaving again. So I painted purple spots and added some green until I had a bunch of beautiful violets.

While I painted, I thought about Tanya. Should I have handed her my napkin? Let her borrow my sweatshirt? Should I have spilled my juice so everyone stared at me instead?

What does it mean to be kind anyway? What does it mean to be kind to someone? Or what does it mean for someone to be kind to anyone?

Maybe it's giving. Maybe I can make cookies for Mr. Rainbow who lives alone in the house up the hill. Or let someone with smaller feet have my too-tight shoes.

Maybe it's helping. Putting dirty dishes in the sink, like helping out Mommy clean up after dinner. Picking up dirty laundry and making my own bed. Cleaning up for Otis, our class Guinea pig, who is a messy eater.

Maybe it's paying attention. Telling my friend that I like his blue boots. Asking the new girl to be my partner in class. Listening to Granny's stories, even the ones I've heard before.

Being kind could also be saying nice things about someone, like telling Mom that she looked so pretty today and appreciated her dinner.

Being kind should be easy, like picking up a cookie bag on the ground,

recycling a bottle, or saying "Thank you!" and "Bless you!"

My mom says the quickest way to be kind is to greet your friend with their names, like "Hey, Carla!", "What's new, Oliver?", or "Good afternoon, Mark."

Being kind can be hard, too. Even when you know what to do. Teaching someone something I'm good at is tricky, even when I'm patient. And sticking up for someone when other kids aren't kind is really hard and really scary.

Maybe I can't solve Tanya's grape juice problem. Maybe all I can do is sit by her in art class and paint this picture for her because I know she likes purple, too.

Maybe I can only do small things. But small things can make a difference, too. My small things might join small things other people do. And together they could grow into something big. So big that all our kindnesses spill out of our school, spread throughout the town, travel across the country, go all the way around the world, and someday it will come back to Tanya and me. So we can be kind again and again.