

Indy's Child (Helping Tree)

By Leslie Olsen

Tough emotional subjects are hard to explain to little ones, so when they hear the word Holocaust or ask about Anne Frank this month during Holocaust remembrance events, what do you say and do? You can use the opportunity to help them understand age-appropriate concepts such as the importance of having empathy for others and show them ways in which they can help others.

In *The Power of Children* gallery at The Children's Museum of Indianapolis, a magnetic "helping tree" plants important seeds in the minds of youngsters. Each leaf placed on the "magic" tree provides a suggestion for helping others.

- Share your treats
- Let others go first
- Make new friends
- Help the earth! (water flowers)
- Don't walk away angry
- Help out
- Share your toys
- Let everyone play
- Say "thanks"
- Pick up trash
- Sit with someone new
- Share your treats

Make Your Own "Helping Tree"

Step One: Gather Supplies

- Colorful construction paper
- Child appropriate scissors
- Glue or paste
- Markers or crayons

Step Two: Make your tree and leaves

- Draw a thick tree trunk with branches on construction paper
- Cut out the tree and glue on a construction paper background
- Draw leaves and write "help" messages on each
- Cut out the leaves

Step Three: Decorate the tree

- Each time the child accomplishes a "help" suggestion, glue the leaf to the tree and watch it grow!

You can also use concrete examples to explain the Holocaust to older children. Anne Frank wrote in her famous diary while she and her family hid from the Nazi's in an attic in Amsterdam. A copy of that diary is on display at the museum. In it, she talks about the giant horse chestnut tree that became her link to the outside world. As she watched it change with the seasons, it helped her cope. You might want to visit the Anne Frank Peace Park in front of The Children's Museum to see a sapling from that mighty tree that once grew outside her home.

“Mighty oaks from little acorns grow” 14th century proverb

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