NURTURING FAMILY AND FRIENDS

PART OF THE FAMILY
ED U. GATOR’S NEW COUSIN
AN AMAZING ANIMAL
What is a family? That question is a little bit hard to answer, because families can be very different. Some families have two parents, three children, a dog, a cat and a canary. Some families have one parent, six kids and four ferrets. Some people live with grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. You might be an only child, or you might have a whole bunch of brothers and sisters. It doesn’t really matter how many people are in your family. The important thing is that you’re part of a family. Families nurture us, which means they give us love, security and understanding. Just as your parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles love and take care of you, you need to love and take care of them, too! The more we love, nurture, and look out for each other, the better off everyone will be.

Now you know what a family is. Okay, here’s another question. What is a friend? You probably look around you and see lots of people you call friends. But it takes a special person to be a friend. A friend is someone who respects you, who treats you nicely and fairly, and who understands you and cares about you. A friend is someone you can talk with easily. A friend is someone who stands by you when you’re lonely or sad or sick. It takes hard work to be a friend and hard work to keep one, too! But when you’ve got a good friend, it’s worth all that hard work because a good friend is one of the best, and most important, things in the world!

Friends and family are what life is all about! So be good to your parents and grandparents. Look out for your brothers and sisters. Take care of your friends. All that hard work will pay off in the end!

ACTIVITY:
Think about the ways in which your family takes care of you. Who feeds you or helps you get dressed? Who makes sure you get to school in the morning? Who gives you a hug when you’re feeling sad? Who takes you to the doctor when you have a fever? Those are just a few ways your family nurtures you. What are some of the others?
Hi friends. Ed here again. I’ve got some great news. I have a brand new cousin! Last week, Mom got a phone call from our Aunt Lucy Gill in Swamp City. Aunt Lucy just gave birth to a baby gator. Her name is Melinda Mae Gill. To tell you the truth, at first I wasn’t very excited. I thought, “A new baby, big deal.” In fact, when Mom said we were going to visit the new baby on Saturday, I was disappointed. Franklin and Gabe were supposed to come over that afternoon to help me paint the clubhouse. But Mom said we all had to go. So our whole family squeezed into the station wagon and drove to Swamp City. The whole way, I was wishing to be back home working in the backyard with my friends.

When we walked into Aunt Lucy’s house, all we heard was screaming. Melinda Mae seemed pretty unhappy. Uncle Toddi said they couldn’t figure out if Melinda was hungry or tired. She just cried and cried. That’s all I ever see babies do! And make messes of themselves when they’re eating. That’s why I’m not too crazy about being around them, even when they happen to be my cousin!

As hard as she tried, Aunt Lucy couldn’t calm Melinda Mae down. She handed the baby to Uncle Toddi. He rocked her in his arms and said some funny words to her, but she just kept crying. Then Mom tried to hold her. The baby screamed even louder! Then Dad tried, too. So did Gramps. But nobody could make little Melinda happy. Aunt Lucy took her again and tried giving her a warm bottle. But that didn’t stop her crying either. Suddenly the doorbell rang. Aunt Lucy got up to answer it and said, “Here Ed. Could you please hold Melinda for a minute while I answer the door?”

I didn’t know what to do. I wasn’t even sure how to hold her. She was a lot heavier than I expected. Then something funny happened. Melinda Mae stopped crying! Right there in my arms! I couldn’t believe it! Neither could Uncle Toddi, Mom, Dad, El or Gramps. I looked down at her tiny brown eyes, and guess what? She was smiling! When Aunt Lucy came back in the room with her next door neighbor, she was as surprised as everybody else. Well, it turns out that I held my little cousin for the rest of the afternoon. Every time I tried to hand her to somebody else, she started that screaming again. So I just kept holding her. I rocked her a little. I sang her my favorite song by the Goo Goo Gators. I tickled her toes. She really liked that! I read her a book and even gave her a bottle. She just kept smiling up at me with those pretty brown eyes. Do you know what really surprised me? How good it felt to take care of Melinda Mae. I was glad I could make her feel happy and comfortable. I was even a little bit sad when we had to leave!

Franklin, Gabe and I painted the clubhouse on Sunday. I told them all about my new baby cousin. Franklin said the same thing I had said, “New baby, huh? Big deal.” But after spending the day with Melinda Mae, I’d have to say it was a very, very big deal!

QUESTIONS

1) When Mom first told Ed about his new baby cousin, what did he say?

2) Why was Ed disappointed about having to go visit Melinda Mae Gill?

3) What was Melinda Mae doing when Ed got to Aunt Lucy’s house? How did the family try to calm her down?

4) What happened when Ed held her? What were some of the things he did that made her happy?

5) At the end of the day, how did Ed feel about his new cousin? Why was he sad?

6) Have you ever gotten the chance to hold a new baby? What was it like?
**WHAT DOES A HUG LOOK LIKE?**

*Directions:* In the picture below, grandparents are cuddling their grandchild. Think about how good it feels when you get a hug from someone in your family. Then color in the picture with crayons or markers.

![Hug Illustration]

**A FRIEND IS SOMEONE WHO . . .**

*Directions:* Think about one of your good friends. On the lines below, write a few words about what makes that person a good friend. Ask an adult if you need help. Then think about what you wrote about your friend. Would your friend say those same nice things about you?

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IN THE NEWSPAPER

Directions: If you could save up your money, what kind of present would you buy for one of your good friends or someone in your family? Look through the paper at the advertisements. See if you can find something that this person would like to have. Cut it out and paste it in the space below. Then draw a picture of that person next to your special gift.

PORTRAIT OF MY FAMILY

Directions: In the space below, draw a picture of your family. Make sure you include everyone. Even your family pet!
There once was a dog named Creole. He was a big furry gray dog with a kind heart, a soft touch, a friendly face and a loud, joyful bark.

Creole's best friend in the whole world was a duck named Greeny. Greeny was a green duck, as you might imagine, with bright red and yellow feathers running along his back. Greeny had a great sense of humor and a boisterous quack. He always looked after Creole, and made sure nothing bad ever happened to his friend. And Creole kept an eye out for Greeny, too. The two friends were never far apart.

The other dogs who lived near Creole made fun of him. "Dogs don't have ducks for friends," they said.

"Oh, but I do!" Creole would say, bounding off to the pond to play with his buddy.


"But it's true!" said Greeny, paddling over to meet his companion at the edge of the pond. On the hottest summer days, Greeny would bring water for Creole to drink. On the coldest winter nights, Creole would wrap Greeny up in his warm soft fur. In the springtime, Greeny taught Creole how to swim. In the fall, Creole taught Greeny how to jump from rock to rock and roll down the hill. On some days, the sound of joyful barking and boisterous quacking could be heard for miles!

It didn't matter to Creole that Greeny was a duck and not a dog. And it certainly didn't bother Greeny that Creole was a dog, and not a duck. They both knew that good friends were hard to find, and that having a good friend was the most important thing in the world!

So you see, it makes no difference what your friends look like. They might be big or little, green or gray, furry or feathery. A true friend doesn't care about that kind of stuff. A true friend simply cares about you!

**VOCABULARY:**

- **Boisterous:** wild and noisy.
- **Bound:** to move quickly with leaps and jumps.
- **Companion:** friend.
Binti Jua is a gorilla who lives at the Brookfield Zoo near Chicago. In the summer of 1996, Binti did something that was truly amazing. She saved a three year old boy who had fallen onto the concrete floor of the gorilla pit at the zoo. The boy had hit his head on a rock and was completely unconscious.

The people who had seen the boy fall were afraid that he might be attacked by the other gorillas in the pit. With her own baby on her back, Binti scooped up the injured child and carried him safely to the door where zoo workers could get to him. Luckily, the boy was rushed to a hospital where he made a speedy recovery. Everyone was very surprised that a gorilla would know how to nurture and care for a human child.

The name "Binti Jua" means "daughter of sunlight." Binti was born at the Columbus Zoo, and has lived her whole life being cared for by humans. When she was old enough to give birth to a baby, zookeepers gave her lessons in how to be a good parent. They gave her a stuffed animal to play with and nurture. Binti has turned out to be a very affectionate and responsible mother.

Since rescuing the little boy at the zoo, Binti has become quite a celebrity. Thousands of people visit the zoo just to see this courageous and caring gorilla. She continues to receive lots of mail and presents from people all over the world.

**VOCABULARY:**

- **Unconscious:** not awake.
- **Attack:** to try to hurt someone or something.
- **Affectionate:** very loving.
- **Celebrity:** a famous person.
TIPS

1) Teach and reinforce with your child the value of a good friendship. Encourage him/her to be caring, considerate and loyal to his/her friends. Share with your child stories about good friends you’ve had throughout your life, and what qualities you look for in a friend.

2) Slow down long enough to show your child affection. Kisses and hugs go a very long way in maintaining your child’s self-esteem. We shower babies with affection, but we tend to do it less with our older kids. They need it, too!

3) Keep in touch with members of your extended family, young and old. Whenever possible, include your child in family gatherings. It’s reassuring to your child to know he/she is part of a bigger family picture. If relatives live too far away to visit, write letters or send photos to them.

4) Kids learn a great deal about nurturing and responsibility from their interactions with family pets. If you have a pet, try to let your child take part in its care. Is your child gentle or rough with animals? Look for opportunities to encourage positive, nurturing behaviors.

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Here’s an activity that can be done one evening, but really could happen on a regular basis. Drag out some of your dusty old memories about your childhood. Talk about what it was like when you were growing up. Kids have a hard time understanding adults were little once, too! If possible, take out old photos, slides or videos of your family. Also, tell your child about things that happened when he/she was an infant. Relating these incidents will help instill them in your child’s memory, and in your memory, too!

RESOURCES


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