**HANDOUT: DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION FOR PARENTS**

**Virtue: LOVE**

**What is love?**

 Love is a special feeling that fills your heart. You show love in a smile, a pleasant way of speaking, a thoughtful act or a hug. Love is treating people and things with special care and kindness because they mean so much to you. Love is treating other people just as you would like them to treat you- with care and respect.

**Why practice it?**

 Without love, people feel alone. When they don’t feel they matter to anyone, they become unhappy. Sometimes they act angry and don’t let others get close. Everyone wants to be liked. Everyone likes to be loved. When you are being loving, you help others to feel important. They become gentler and kinder. Love is contagious. It keeps spreading.

**How do you practice it?**

 Love is putting yourself in someone else’s shoes and caring about what they feel. It is accepting them, loving them just as they are. You can even be loving to people you don’t know, just by caring about what happens to them and sending loving thoughts. Sharing is a way to show love. Share your belongings, your time and yourself. Love is thinking about how you want to be treated and treating others the same way.

**Signs of Success**

You are practicing love when you…

* Treat others as you would want them to treat you
* Say kind and loving things
* Share your things and yourself
* Show affection
* Think loving thoughts
* Take good care of the things you love

Affirmation

I am a loving person.

I show my love with thoughtful acts, kind words and affection.

I treat others the way I want to be treated.

**Quotable Quotes**

*“Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it.”* –Rumi

*“Love doesn’t just sit there like a stone; it has to be made, like bread, remade all the time, made new.”* –Ursula K. Le Guin

*“Love cures people- both the ones who give it and the ones who receive it.”* –Karl Menninger

*“Spread love everywhere you go, first in your own house.”* –Mother Teresa

*“Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend.”* –Martin Luther King, Jr.

*“Concentrate all the thoughts of your heart on love and unity. When a thought of war comes, oppose it by a stronger thought of peace. A thought of hatred must be destroyed by a more powerful thought of love.”* –'Abdu’l-Bahá

From The Virtues Project Educator’s Guide, by Linda Kavelin Popov

**Virtue: LOVE**

**Lesson Plan for infants/toddlers**

**Open Play (20 minutes) and Parent Discussion:**

Invite children to play with toys- gently guiding and reminding them of the virtues of kindness, love and sharing. While keeping an eye on their children, parents talk about how to support the development of LOVE in their families.

**Share the following quote from the Bahai Writings:**

“Know thou of a certainty that Love is the secret of God's holy Dispensation, the manifestation of the All-Merciful, the fountain of spiritual outpourings. Love is heaven's kindly light, the Holy Spirit's eternal breath that vivifieth the human soul. Love is the cause of God's revelation unto man, the vital bond inherent, in accordance with the divine creation, in the realities of things. Love is the one means that ensureth true felicity both in this world and the next. Love is the light that guideth in darkness, the living link that uniteth God with man, that assureth the progress of every illumined soul. Love is the most great law that ruleth this mighty and heavenly cycle, the unique power that bindeth together the divers elements of this material world, the supreme magnetic force that directeth the movements of the spheres in the celestial realms. Love revealeth with unfailing and limitless power the mysteries latent in the universe. Love is the spirit of life unto the adorned body of mankind, the establisher of true civilization in this mortal world, and the shedder of imperishable glory upon every high-aiming race and nation.”

(Abdu'l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 27)

* **What thoughts do you have about how to nurture the development of an all-embracing love for humanity in your family?**
* **How can we nurture the bond of love that we have with our partner and make sure that it continues to grow and flourish?**
* **What do you think communicates the message of love to our children?**

After about twenty minutes, a song with a verse about LOVE is played, indicating that it is almost time to start the formal part of our playgroup.

**The Verse played is “You live to do good and to bring happiness to others.”** (From the Virtues In Us, Quotations CD)

Once the song is over, children and parents clean up toys while singing a clean-up song:

There are several cute and easy songs to choose from: Select one and have that be your 'clean up theme song' for the class.

Song 1: Clean up, clean up, everybody everywhere.

 Clean up, clean up, everybody do your share.

Song 2: *(spoken)* Time to clean up, everyone. Let's pick up our things!

*(Chorus)*

Clean up, everybody clean up (x3)

 Time to clean up!

 Pick up, everybody pick up (x3)

 Time to pick up!

Pick up the toys, put them away

Pick up the blocks, put them away

Pick up the books, put them away

Put your things away

Song 3: Clean up, clean up, it's time to clean up

 We've had our time to learn and play

 And spend time with our friends today

 But now it's time to go away, so let us all clean up

 Yes, let us all clean up

**Opening Prayer:** Invite children to practice reverence by asking them to sit in their parent’s lap while a very short prayer is said or sung. We always start with a prayer, because God is the source of all spiritual qualities, and we want to call on Him to aid us in our spiritual development.

(optional- one parent says) “O Thou the Compassionate God! Bestow upon me a heart which, like unto glass, may be illumined with the light of Thy love, and confer upon me thoughts which may change this world into a rose-garden through the outpourings of heavenly grace. Thou art the Compassionate, the Merciful! Thou art the Great Beneficent God!" ~ 'Abdu’l-Bahá

**Prayer for all to say together: O God Guide Me**

(CD: Tender Years - 2: Julie Iraninejad and Shabnam Cyrus)

**O God, guide me, protect me,**

**make of me a shining lamp and a brilliant star.**

**Thou art the Mighty and the Powerful.** ~ 'Abdu’l-Bahá

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| **WORDS** | ACTIONS |
| **O God** | Raise both hands up to sky, while looking upward, as if entreating God |
| **guide me** | Hold left arm in front of you with palm open, facing up. Move your right hand forward over your left from, from elbow to hand |
| **protect me** | put both hands on top of head and slightly bow your head |
| **make of** | grip hands tightly, twice, as if forming clay |
| **me** | put both hands on heart |
| **a shining lamp** | Smile and look up as you put both hands out to your side and bring them up above your head, and have the tips of your fingers touch each other, like are forming the shape of a lamp |
| **And a brilliant star** | Then move both hands down along the side of your body, wiggling your fingers until they are at your side |
| **Thou art** | point with both fingers up to the sky |
| **the Mighty** | both arms out and show your muscles |
| **and the** | open both hands up to the sky |
| **Powerful** | Bow head slightly while lowering open hands in front of you |

**Song: Hello Song** (Music Together, Bongos CD)

Hello everybody! So glad to see you! Hello everybody, so glad to see you too!

Hello to \_\_\_\_, so glad to see you! Hello to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, so glad to see you too!

Hello everybody! So glad to see you! Hello everybody, so glad to see you!

(sing each child’s name and parent’s name)

**Introduction to the Virtue of Love:**

 Love is a special feeling that fills our hearts. We show love in a smile, a pleasant way of speaking, a thoughtful act or a hug. Love is treating people with special care and kindness because we care for them so much!

**Read a book about LOVE: I Love You As Much… by Laura Krauss Melmed (or any other book about love- can change it out each week for a new book until have finished a whole month of lessons on LOVE)**

**\*Note- not all the songs in this lesson need to be taught the first week. We usually do one virtue a month and meet each week, bringing in a couple new songs and a new story to keep it interesting, but also repeating many songs because infants and toddlers love repetition.**

**Song: Love, Service, Joy and Gentleness** (Family Learning House, Children’s Virtues Songs- Preschool CD; available through ITunes, produced by Virtues in Us)

Love, service, joy and gentleness.

Love, service, joy and gentleness.

These are virtues we possess.

Love, service, joy and gentleness.

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| **WORDS** | ACTIONS |
| **Love** | touch your heart |
| **Service** | extend your hand as though serving someone |
| **Joy** | raise your hands to your face and smile joyously |
| **Gentleness** | stroke your left arm with your right hand gently. |

**Song: I’ve Got Peace Like a River**

(Favorite Children’s Songs from the Family Learning House CD)

I’ve got peace like a river. I’ve got peace like a river.

I’ve got peace like a river in my soul.

I’ve got peace like a river. I’ve got peace like a river.

I’ve got peace like a river in my soul.

I’ve got joy like a fountain. I’ve got joy like a fountain.

I’ve got joy like a fountain in my soul.

I’ve got joy like a fountain. I’ve got joy like a fountain.

I’ve got joy like a fountain in my soul.

I’ve got love like the ocean. I’ve got love like the ocean.

I’ve got love like the ocean in my soul.

I’ve got love like the ocean. I’ve got love like the ocean.

I’ve got love like the ocean in my soul.

I’ve got peace like a river in my soul. I’ve got peace like a river in my soul.

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| **WORDS** | ACTIONS |
| **.... peace** | clasp hands in front of you like you are in prayer |
| **... river** | have hands flowing vertically in front of you |
| **... soul** | touch your heart |
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| **... joy** | put hands up to your face and then out to the side with fingers open |
| **... love** | make a heart with your hands in front of you |
| **... ocean** | make waves horizontally to teach side |

**Song: Love, Love, Love Your Friends** (sung to the tune of “Row, row, row your boat”)

Love, love, love your friends. Love them everyday.

Show them that you care for them by sharing when you play.

Pray, pray, pray each day, morning, noon and night,

for God to fill your heart with love, happiness and light.

*Action:* Sit facing your child and hold both of their hands, rocking back and forth.

**Hand out egg shakers to each child to share during the following song:**

**Song: Utmost Love and Kindliness** (Tim Urbonya, Angels in the World CD)

Treat all thy friends and relatives, even strangers,

with the spirit of utmost love and kindliness.

**Collect egg shakers and give each child a big paper heart (laminated with rough edges smoothed) to hold and pass around during the following song. Make sure there are extra hearts because some like to hold onto theirs and then they can still have some to pass! (very age appropriate to want to keep there’s!):**

**Song: Love is Something if you Give it Away**

Love is something if you give it away, you give it away, you give it away.

Love is something if you give it away, it comes right back to you.

It’s just like a magic penny. Hold on tight and you won’t have any!

Lend it, spend it, give it away and it comes right back to you.

(can then replace Love with other words such as a hug, a smile, etc.)

**Collect hearts and pass out drums to play to the following song:**

**Song: Concentrate** (Tim Urbonya, Angels in the World CD)

Concentrate all the thoughts of your heart on love and unity. x2

When a thought of war comes oppose it by a stronger thought of peace.

A thought of hatred must be destroyed by a more powerful thought of love.

**Collect drums and pass out balls to be rolled during the following song** (it is great if the kids can be seated as they do this, but go with the needs of the children; balls should not leave the ground)**:**

**Song: All You Need is Love** (The Beatles)

**Collect balls and invite caregivers to dance with their child to the following song:**

**Song: Love All The World** (Tim Urbonya, Love All The World CD)

To be a Baha’i simply means to love all the world,

 to love humanity and try to serve it.

To work for universal peace and universal brotherhood.

**Closing Verse:** Invite children to practice reverence by asking them to sit in their parent’s lap while a very short Verse is said.

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| **O Friend! In the garden of thy heart plant naught but the rose of love.** ~Baha’u’llah |

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| **WORDS** | ACTIONS |
| **O Friend** | both hands out in front of you with palms up |
| **In the garden** | both hands moving to either side in front of you, horizontally |
| **of thy heart** | make a heart with both hands in front of you |
| **plant naught** | cup your left hand in front of you and with your right hand make a pinching motion like you are planting something in your left hand |
| **the rose of love** | move your hands up your body and make a heart with your arms above your head, finger tips on the top of your head |

**Closing Song:** (sung to the tune of "Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear....)

There are several different tunes for the Teddy Bear rhyme you can find on YouTube. Here is one version

**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sSLlm5bwzjs**

Loving child, loving child turn around. (turn around)

Loving child, loving child, touch the ground. (touch the ground)

Loving child, loving child, show your shoe (hold foot up and point to shoe)

Loving child, loving child, I love you! (hugs all around!)

Loving child, loving child, reach for the sky. (reach up!)

Children’s class is over. It’s time to say goodbye! (wave and say, “goodbye!”)