

COMPASSION

explorer



**Strong
Minds
Big Smiles**

WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND, EXPLORERS?

It's important for all kids to have strong minds. A few ways to do that are to get an education, have good mental health and know Jesus!

Inside this issue, you'll find out how kids living in poverty keep their minds strong so they can get through challenges. You'll find activities to help you stay calm when you have big feelings and learn what the Bible says about loving God with all your mind.

Check it out!



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What fun captions did readers like you send in?

DISCOVER myWORLD page 4
Meet kids in poverty who have strong minds.

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Make a fire-breathing dragon to chill out.

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This African recipe will give you a brain boost!

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Learn fun facts about Ghana in West Africa.

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Quiz: What makes you feel loved the most?

GROW page 15
See what God says about loving him with your mind.

GIGGLE

Remember this picture from the Spring 2024 Compassion Explorer Magazine? It shows a girl named Angela in Bolivia and her pet llama, Rufo, who likes to eat barley and drink water! Find more Giggle photos and kids' captions at explorer.compassion.com/explorers.

But, Mom, it's Bring Your Llama to School Day!
Matti, 11
Colorado Springs, Colo.

My spit is getting squeezed out of me.
Quinn, 12
Grand Island, Neb.

Rufo and I love to drink llama-nade together!
Ainsley, 10
Puyallup, Wash.

Girl: God gave me PURE LIVING FLUFF.
Rebekah, 11
Long Beach, Calif.

Llama: Oh, boy, not again!
Gabriel, 9
Jamesport, Mo.

Angela: Llama hug? Rufo: ¡Sí! Not so tight, though ...
Summer, 13, and Larkyn, 9
Apple Valley, Minn.

I llove my llama!
Benjamin, 8
Novi, Mich.

¿Como se llama?
Jocelyn, 11
Santa Barbara, Calif.

Llama: She "barley" noticed she was squishing me!
Piper, 6
Puyallup, Wash.

I'm hugging a llama in my pajamas!
Alicia, 7
New Brighton, Penn.

Barley, water, hugs, repeat!
Josiah and Douglas, 10
Stevens Point, Wis.



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Check out the next Giggle photo on the back cover!

Why I Smile

Kids in poverty find reasons to laugh and smile every day. Despite the hard things they face, God is putting joy in their hearts and minds. Because of Jesus' love and caring people in their lives, these kids are resilient. That means they don't let challenges keep them down. Let's see what that looks like!



New friends make Deborah smile.

"These years attending the Compassion center have brought many blessings to my life, including love, support and companionship."
— Deborah



Before she joined a Compassion center in Mexico, Deborah didn't have many friends. Her mom worked from dawn until dusk. So Deborah and her little brother stayed home with their grandma most days.

And even after she joined the Compassion center, Deborah didn't talk to kids her age. Other kids scared her. What if they didn't like her? What if they said something mean?

"I remember she was a very serious child," says Dalia, her Compassion center tutor. "She didn't say a word!"

But Dalia and other staff encouraged her to join the activities. Before too long she was laughing and smiling! With the help of kind adults, she was on her way to making friends.

Do you have adults in your life who help you make new friends?

Butterflies make Isabela smile.

"My best friend cried a lot when she saw me after the surgery because I was missing my leg. She always plays with me and doesn't leave me alone."
— Isabela



These days, Isabela smiles often. "I love butterflies," she says. "I like to chase them and see them land on my finger. They are so beautiful." Lucky for her, butterflies are everywhere in her home country of Brazil!

But there was a time when Isabela was sad. That's because a truck hit her when she was 9. To make it worse, her wounds didn't heal. She got sicker and sicker. Eventually, the doctor told her parents that they needed to remove her leg. No wonder Isabela was sad! Who wouldn't be? Even today, having lost her leg makes her sad.

"Not having my leg makes me sad sometimes, and I want it back," she says.

But friends and family surrounded Isabela with love. Her family tended to her wounds. Compassion staff gave her gifts. So did her nurses and doctors.

Plus, her best friend has been by her side since she left the hospital. Her friend cried when she saw Isabela had lost her leg. Now she plays with her always! All these kind people have helped her feel resilient.

Who gets sad with you when you feel down?

Jonathan is a great speaker. Even when he was little, people paid attention when he talked.

During the pandemic shutdowns in El Salvador, he and his mom made encouraging videos for his friends. He used his trusty puppet Rosita to make the videos more fun for kids his age.

Compassion staff noticed his talent. They asked him to join a program that teaches kids how to share the gospel.

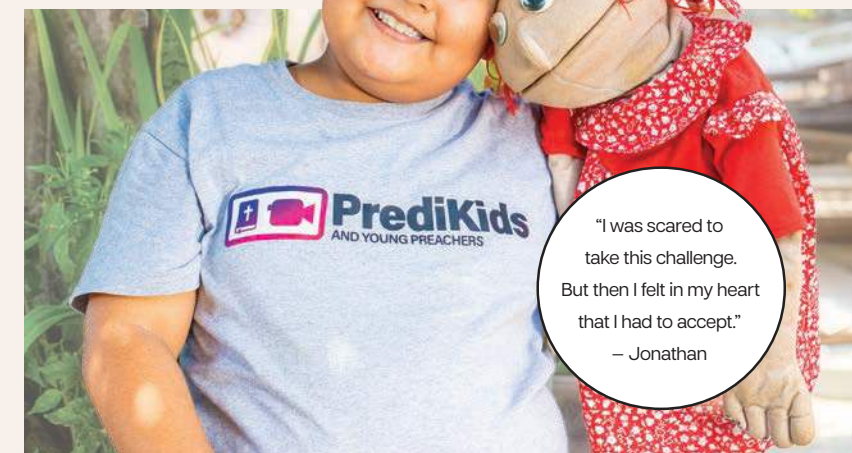
At first, Jonathan was scared. But he felt God calling him to use his talents for good. And God has been with him every step. One time, he forgot the message he had written down. But God was there for him. The Holy Spirit helped him remember every word he had prepared.

Now Jonathan is so glad that he gets to make other kids smile.

Who gives you the courage to use your talents for good?

Using his talents for God makes Jonathan smile.

"I was scared to take this challenge. But then I felt in my heart that I had to accept."
— Jonathan



Nawmaybee's mom makes her smile.



"I wouldn't run. I stayed inside my house with my children. If anything happened, they'd be in my arms." – Teedoh, Nawmaybee's mom

What did you do the last time you heard a plane circling overhead? Maybe you looked up and stared at its vapor trail. Maybe you didn't do anything at all!

But Nawmaybee ran into her mother's arms. That's because she used to hear bombers flying above her. She's heard stories of bombers destroying other villages.

Nawmaybee lives in an area on Thailand's border where violence and food shortages were common. It was so scary for Nawmaybee, who's 8 years old.

But she's still smiling! That's because her mom, Teedoh, is with her every step of the way. When bombers fly over the village, Teedoh doesn't run. She holds Nawmaybee close. And they both receive love and support, including groceries, from Nawmaybee's Compassion center.

Who holds you tight when you're scared?



Everybody feels hard things. Everybody feels shy, scared and sad sometimes. It's part of life. But that's where the people who love you can help! They can give you the courage to make new friends. To use your talents to bless other kids. They can even feel sad with you when you're down. And they can help you feel resilient, even when you feel weak.

And no matter what, God is watching over you. Ask him for help! Tell him how you feel when you're scared or sad. He might surprise you with the ways he gives you laughter and joy.



Romans 12:15 (ESV): Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

The thought of losing her dad scared Lynet. He was in the hospital because of a serious illness. Having a loved one in the hospital is scary in Uganda, just like it is here. Everyone around her had lost hope that he would get better – except her stepmom. She told Lynet that God could heal her dad.

That night, Lynet read her Bible and prayed. She read Psalm 120:1: "I call on the LORD in my distress, and he answers me." Later that night, she read Isaiah 59:1: "Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear."

She stayed up until 4 a.m. praying for her dad.

The next day she visited her dad in the hospital. She was scared. She saw other families with sick relatives, but everything changed when she saw her dad. He sat up! He held her in his arms! Lynet knew it was a miracle from God.

Her dad came home three weeks later. God turned her sadness into happiness by answering her prayer.

What Bible verses give you the courage to pray and trust God?

Prayer makes Lynet smile.



"God's answers don't always come quickly. But they are never late." – Lynet



Craft

Dragon Breather



Focusing on your breathing is a great way to calm your mind when you have big feelings. This fire-breathing dragon craft is a fun way to breathe with purpose! Next time you feel afraid or so angry you think you could breathe fire, try this fun way to cool off. It works best if you pray while you do it!

Supplies

- 1 empty cardboard tube (from toilet paper or a halved paper towel tube).
- 1 sheet of construction paper.
- Glue stick.
- 2 medium-size pompoms for eyes.
- 2 googly eyes.
- 2 small pompoms for nostrils.
- Hot glue gun or glue dots.
- A few scraps of orange, red and yellow tissue paper.

Instructions

1. *Adult help needed.* Cut a piece of construction paper to the size needed to wrap around the cardboard tube. Use your glue stick to glue it to the tube.
2. Use a glue gun or glue dots to attach each googly eye to each pompom.
3. Attach the medium pompoms as eyes to one end of the cardboard tube using a glue gun or glue dots.
4. Attach the smaller pompoms as nostrils on the other end of the tube with a glue gun or glue dots.
5. Cut out skinny, 8-inch-long pieces of tissue paper to be the dragon's fire. Use your glue stick to attach them to the inside of the tube under the dragon's nostrils, working your way around the tube. Leave a 2-inch gap on the bottom without tissue paper glued to it. It's ready for fire breathing and prayer!



To use your dragon tube:

1. Place the end of the tube with the dragon's eyes over your mouth and exhale (breathe out) through the tube. Cut the pieces of tissue shorter if the "fire" doesn't move much.
2. Remove it from your mouth. Breathe in through your nose while you silently say a prayer.
3. Breathe out through the tube again.
4. Continue until your mind feels more calm.

Here are a few ideas for prayers to say while you breathe:

- God, I trust that you're in control.
- Jesus, please take away my anger.
- God, you know what's best for me.
- God's got this.
- Jesus, make my heart feel better.

DECODE the EMOTICON

You just might get emotional over this puzzler! Can you decode the emoticons to figure out common sayings about feelings?

Example:

😊 + 🏕️ + R = Happy camper

😱 + 2 + 👁️ =

😓 + 📣 + 🥛 =

😡 + 🏃 =

🎣 + 🤝 + 😲 =

✝️ + is + ❤️ =

Create your own:

+ + =

Answers: 1. Scared to look, 2. Cry over spilled milk, 3. Mad dash, 4. Catch by surprise, 5. Jesus is love

The Calm Down GAME

Do you have big feelings sometimes? Feelings are good. God gave us feelings for a reason. But sometimes when we're scared or upset, it's hard to calm down.

Everyone has big feelings – including kids living in poverty. Sponsored kids get help calming down from caring adults at their Compassion centers who share God's love with them.

Knowing how to handle our big feelings when we have them is part of having a strong mind. It's also a part of caring for the people around us. So it's important to know how to calm down.

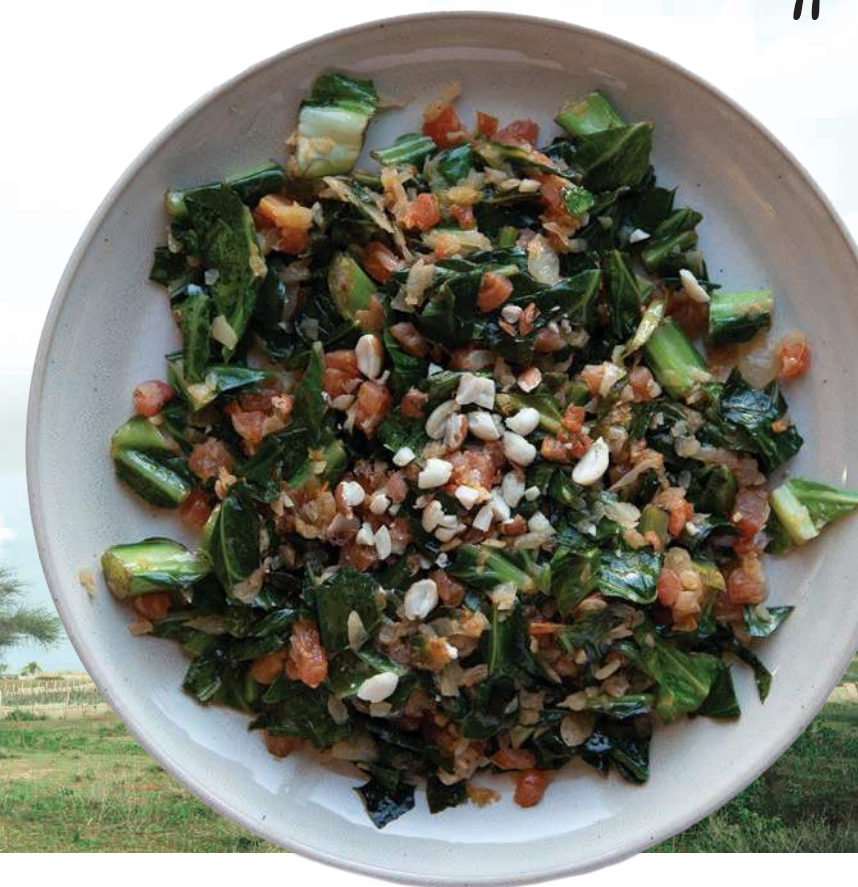
The next time you're scared or upset, try this game to help you relax!

Directions: Roll a die. What number did you roll? Choose an action beside your number on the chart below.

ROLL!	CHOOSE AN ACTION!		
 Move	Dance!	Starfish stretch.	Superman stretch.
 Breathe	Pretend to smell a flower, then pretend to blow out a candle.	Count to five as you breathe in, then to eight as you breathe out.	Pretend you're blowing bubbles.
 Say	I am safe.	I am loved.	I am strong.
 Count	Count three blue things in the room.	Count two things in the room that make you happy.	Count the letters in your name.
 Create	Draw.	Write a prayer.	Build!
 Feel Cozy	Curl up in a blanket.	Hug a parent or friend.	Remember: "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1).

Cook EAST AFRICAN SUKUMA WIKI

Sukuma wiki is a collard greens dish from Kenya and Tanzania. Collards are packed with nutrients like vitamins, calcium and even some protein, which all power a strong mind. Kids around the world eat collards in different ways. Enjoy this fun East African recipe! And feel free to add any meat or spices you like.



Ingredients

- 2 tbsp olive oil.
- 1 medium yellow onion, diced.
- 1 clove garlic, minced, or 1/2 tsp. garlic powder.
- 1 large tomato, diced.
- 1 chicken bouillon cube.
- 1 dash of cayenne pepper (a little bit goes a long way!).
- 1 bunch (about 3 handfuls) of collard greens, thinly sliced.
- Salt and pepper to taste.

Instructions

Adult help needed.

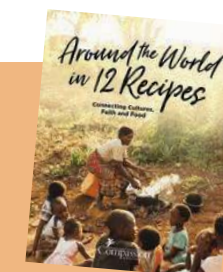
1. Add the olive oil and onion to a pan over medium heat. Saute the onion until clear and soft, about 3-4 minutes.
2. Add the garlic and tomato to the pan and saute 1-3 more minutes. Add bouillon and stir. Cover and turn the heat to low. Simmer for 5 minutes.
3. Uncover the pan. Add the rest of the ingredients and stir. Cook on low for 5-10 minutes, stirring often. You'll know it's done when the collard greens are wilted and soft!

Notes

- Sukuma wiki is usually served with a corn flour dish called *ugali*. For an American twist, try sukuma wiki with cornbread.
- You could also top your greens with cooked and diced ham or bacon to make this like American collard greens. Or top them with crushed peanuts, a common African ingredient in this kind of dish.



Want more delicious recipes? Download your free cookbook from Compassion, "Around the World in 12 Recipes"! Enjoy recipes and stories from Compassion kids all over the world. Which one will be your favorite? explorer.compassion.com/cookbook



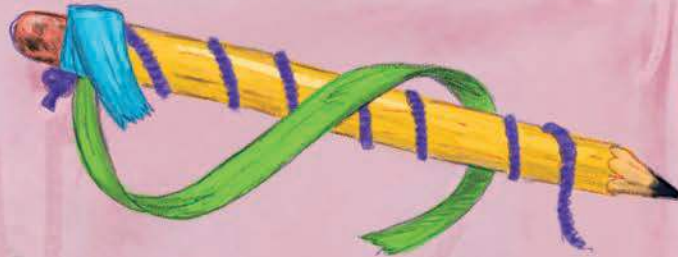
DIY Fidget Toys

Ever feel like monkeys are running wild in your mind or body? Keeping your hands busy with a fidget toy can help you focus in moments like those. Here's how to make your own with simple supplies.

Around the World

Needed: a pipe cleaner, 10 pony beads, a small piece of cardboard and glue.

String the pony beads onto the pipe cleaner. Then bend the pipe cleaner until it's a circle. Twist the ends together to close the circle. With an adult's help, glue those twisted ends to a piece of cardboard. The pipe cleaner should be standing up tall with the cardboard as a base at the bottom. Now you can move the beads around the circle like planes flying around the world!



The Pencil Wrap

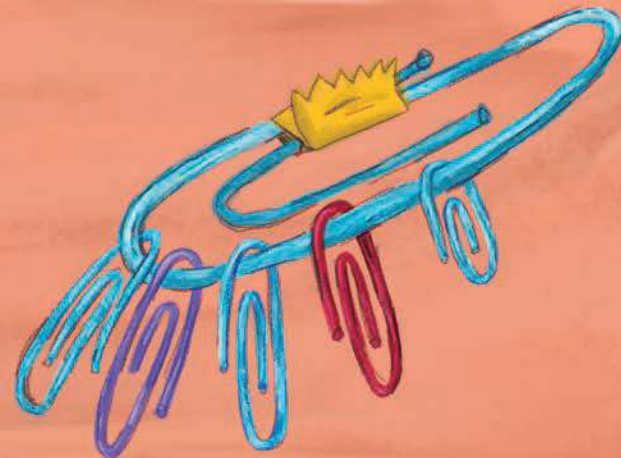
Needed: a pencil and a piece of twine or ribbon. Optional: washi tape.

With an adult's help, cut a long piece of twine or ribbon. Then tie the twine or ribbon to the top of the pencil, under the eraser. Make sure you tie it tight! If you need to make it extra tight, put a little piece of washi tape on top of the knot. Now you can wrap the twine or ribbon around your pencil. You can make all kinds of designs! Ask an adult to help you trim the ribbon if it's too long. You can also wrap washi tape around your pencil to make it extra colorful.

Kid Keys

Needed: a big paper clip, 5-10 smaller paper clips and tape.

String your little paper clips onto the big paper clip. (Slide the open, round part of the little paper clip onto the long, straight part of the big paper clip. Then keep sliding the little paper clip until it's secure in the middle of the big paper clip.) Fit as many as you can! Then use tiny pieces of tape to close the ends of the big paper clip. Now you have a set of "keys" to fidget with.



DISCOVER GHANA

Money used: the cedi.



Slightly smaller than Oregon but with about eight times as many residents.

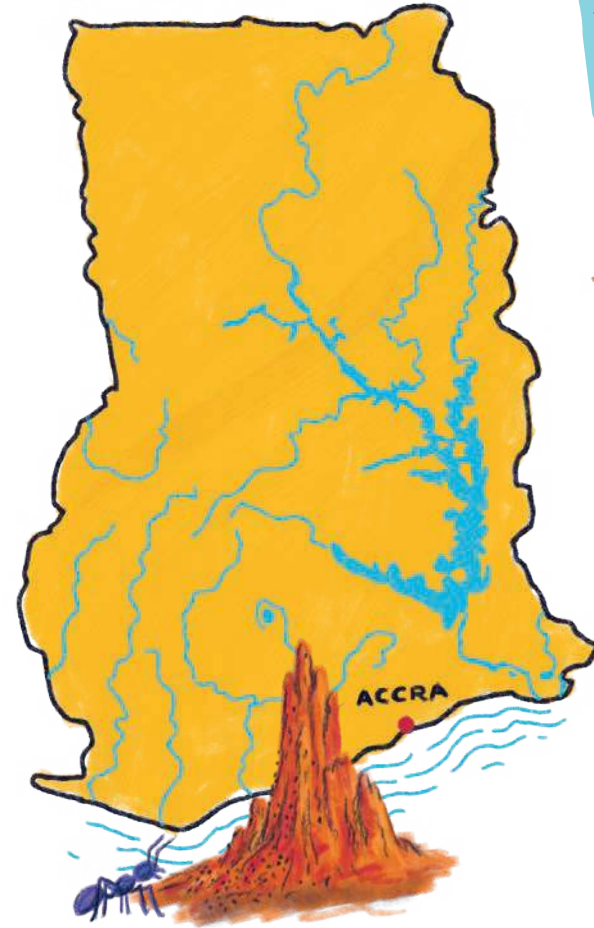


Popular foods: plantains, millet, yams, sorghum, leafy greens (recipe on Page 11).



Wild residents: cobras, leopards, warthogs, scarlet-tailed African gray parrots.

Home to at least 75 people groups and 250 dialects (language forms specific to a region or social group).



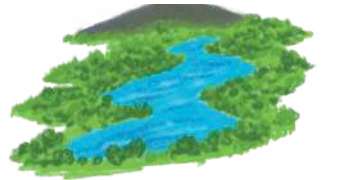
The name of the capital city, Accra, comes from a word for "ants" because of the many anthills in the area.



Where in the world is Ghana? It's in West Africa!



Traditional clothing is made of a brightly colored cloth called kente.



Home to Lake Volta, the world's largest human-made lake (by surface area).



The world's second-largest cocoa producer, after Côte d'Ivoire. Ghanaians have a saying: "Ghana is cocoa. Cocoa is Ghana."

Children begin two years of kindergarten at age 4.

Stats

Ghana

United States

Population	33,846,114	339,665,118
People Living Below Poverty Line	23.4%	15.1%
Languages	English (official), Asante, Ewe, other local dialects.	English, Spanish, Chinese, other
Religions	Christian 71.3%, Muslim 19.9%, other 4.5%, traditionalist 3.2%, none 1.1%.	Protestant 46.5% none/other 26.1% Roman Catholic 20.8% Jewish 1.9% Mormon 1.6%
Typical Family Income	\$5,400 per year	\$63,700 per year



Many children work in the cocoa industry for very low pay.

Violent discipline is used against many children.



Compassion's program works to keep young kids in school instead of working jobs.

Compassion workers teach families about parenting and children's rights.

I Feel Loved When ...

Did you know not everyone feels loved in the same ways? Some people love surprises, and others love hugs. Do you have a friend who wants to play quietly together and another who is LOUD? Because of their different personalities, they probably feel most cared for when you interact with them in different ways.

Ask a friend the questions below so you can learn the ways they feel most loved!

When someone says these words, I feel the MOST loved ...

1. "Give me a hug!"
2. "I have a surprise for you!"
3. "Let's go for a walk!"
4. "You are amazing!"
5. "Let me help you with that!"

I feel the most SPECIAL when ...

1. Someone hugs me or holds my hand.
2. Someone gives me a special birthday gift.
3. Someone spends time with JUST me.
4. Someone tells me that I'm doing a good job.
5. Someone helps me do something hard.

What's your favorite thing to do with your family?

1. Cuddle on the couch with everyone and watching a movie.
2. Surprise your parents with a homemade gift.
3. Spending time together, talking and laughing.
4. Telling each other why and how much we love each other.
5. Helping each other when someone is having a hard time.

I love it when someone GIVES me ...

1. A hug or a high-five.
2. A gift just for me.
3. A day at the park.
4. A compliment.
5. A helping hand.

If someone threw you a SURPRISE PARTY, which part would be your favorite?

1. Hugs from all of my friends who came.
2. The special birthday gifts.
3. Getting to spend time with my friends.
4. Everyone telling me happy birthday.
5. The decorations your friends put up.

Mostly 1's

Your friend receives love through

TOUCH

They love HUGS and HIGH-FIVES.

Mostly 2's

Your friend receives love through

SPECIAL GIFTS

They love small gifts like a FLOWER or a special TOY.

Mostly 3's

Your friend receives love through

TIME TOGETHER

They love ONE-ON-ONE time together with you.

Mostly 4's

Your friend receives love through

KIND WORDS

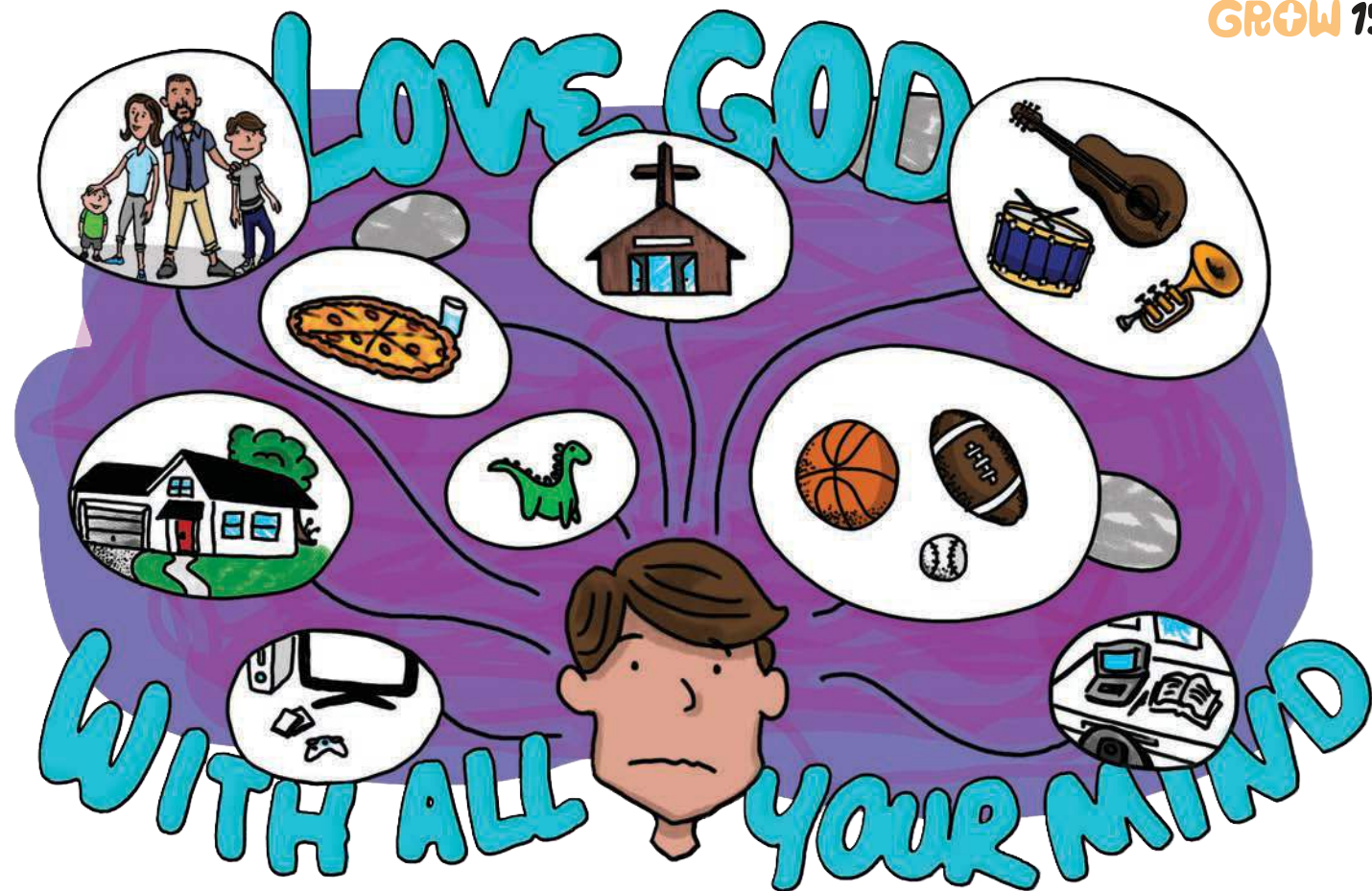
They love when you tell them OUT LOUD how great a friend they are!

Mostly 5's

Your friend receives love through a

HELPING HAND

They love when someone helps them do SOMETHING HARD.



"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." – Mark 12:30, NIV

God created us as spiritual beings (souls) who have bodies and minds. When we talk about the mind, we're talking about our thoughts. So how can we use our thoughts to love God, like Jesus tells us to do in Mark 12:30? Do we even have control over our thoughts?

Try an experiment: Set a timer for one minute. Sit still and try not to think any thoughts until the alarm goes off. How did you do?

It was difficult, wasn't it? Most people find it hard to control their thoughts. But thoughts are important because they often lead to actions. They also shape how we feel about ourselves and the world.

Read

- Hebrews 12:2 — this is a great one to memorize!
- Philippians 4:8. List some things that are true, lovely and excellent.

Scientists have found that, with practice, it is possible to change our thoughts. That shouldn't surprise anyone who has read Philippians:

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things. – Philippians 4:8, NIV

The apostle Paul would not have told the Philippians what to think about if they couldn't control their thoughts, right? He wanted them to think about things that please God. But because everyone is a sinner, we often have thoughts that are not pleasing to God or helpful to us.

Act

- If your family sponsors a child, write them a letter and share kind words, thoughts, drawings and Bible verses.
- Set aside time every day to be still and pray so you can be aware of your thoughts and train your mind to be strong.

So how do we strengthen our minds and guide our thoughts in a way that pleases God?

Here are a few tricks to practice:

- When your thoughts run wild, silently recite a short Bible verse you've memorized.
- When you notice yourself thinking an unkind thought, replace the thought with a kind one.
- Each time you think fearful thoughts, say a prayer of trust.
- The messages we see and hear can shape our thoughts. Next time you choose a TV show to watch or song to listen to, ask yourself if it will give you thoughts that are pleasing to God and kind to others.

Pray

- Thank God for giving you a mind so you can solve problems, think of new ideas and do well in school.
- Pray for Jesus to give you kind and true thoughts.



GIGGLE

Submit your caption at:

explorer.compassion.com/giggles

Just because you play with your food doesn't mean you can't also eat it! Jenny is a student in Compassion's program in Colombia. She's having fun with some orange slices to celebrate receiving a basket of groceries from her Compassion center. Kids like Jenny get regular health checkups to make sure they are growing strong.



Summer Is Almost Here!

With an adult, go online to find activities, crafts and recipes to make the most of the next few months.

explorer.compassion.com/summer-fun

About the cover

Dominga is an 11-year-old who lives in El Salvador. Some kids in poverty can't afford the fees or supplies to go to school. But kids like Dominga who are in Compassion's sponsorship program get to go to school. Education gives them strong minds!

