

Teaching Children and Grandchildren to be Charitable

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Who could argue the value for children learning early about the importance of **giving their time and money** to others? By understanding what it means to be charitable, children can focus on others and the larger world. They can appreciate the **interconnectness** of all people as they pay attention to the reality that some people live in less fortunate circumstances than others. Finally, they learn that each of us has the ability and responsibility to contribute to making the world a better place.

Encouraging **charitable thoughts and action** benefits the children themselves. They can **learn empathy** for others; they see that their actions can lead to a positive outcome; and they feel connected to a particular community -whether local, regional or international. Additionally, a charitable mindset broadens their ability to comprehend and better cope with their own challenging life events.

Many children think only of themselves. The world revolves around them and their needs. Helping our children and grandchildren to **become aware of and to focus on the needs of others** is essential to helping them understand their place in the larger world. Here are some ways you can introduce children to the importance of sharing with and giving to others.

Be a model. When children know that being charitable is a value in your family they begin to comprehend that this is what "this family" believes in and does. Begin with conversation. They see you getting all dressed up to go to a charity event. Do they know what the

charity is? Have you explained what the benefits of giving to this particular organization are and what your money is used for? Have you thought of visiting the on line site or, better still, going to the actual hospital, child care center, animal shelter, or whatever the program is that you are supporting, and sharing that with your children or grandchildren? When you pass someone in need, talk about that person's situation with compassion and empathy. Be careful **NOT** to talk about anyone in need with derision or blame. Your discussion will be guided by the age and maturity of your child. Always respect the humanity of the person or people you discuss. If you see someone who is obviously homeless, you may talk about giving money, books or clothing to a local homeless shelter.

You can **help your child decide** which organizations can be recipients of your child's time, clothes, toys, food and/or money. Depending on your child's age, help him or her research the different programs and **guide them** in ways to become involved. It might be helpful to begin locally so that your child can see first-hand the impact of a particular organization. (Buying, bagging and delivering food to a soup kitchen; sorting through toys that your child no longer plays with and participating in cleaning them and wrapping them for children at a community pre-school). Perhaps your child would like to sort through some of his or her gently used clothes and bring them to a particular site. Some kids enjoy preparing and bringing sandwiches or cookies to the volunteers at the local fire department.

Consider organizations whose missions are of particular interest to your child such as animal sanctuaries, literacy programs, playground / park / garden rejuvenation, and children's illness (collecting baseball caps for kids who lose their hair due to cancer treatments). Encourage your child to volunteer in an organization or in an activity that is meaningful to them. This could include visiting, reading to, and playing games with residents at a nursing home, or writing get-well cards to military service members. Once children decide on an organization, discuss and come up with a plan to regularly set aside part of their allowance for charity. Discuss with them possible allotments, such as 10-15% monthly. www.drdaleatkins.com