



The Bright Side of Life

Teaching kids about charity is a valuable lesson for both you and the children. It is important that children learn at an early age to be considerate of others and to show compassion. When you educate children regarding charity, you teach them important life lessons.

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Children are naturally good at giving. It isn't until they start to grow up and develop a sense of self that the giving lessens and the taking increases. Therefore, teaching children about giving and providing them with the opportunity to practice this natural inclination can prevent the gradual decline that often comes with growing up. By allowing children to experience the benefits of their charity and sharing in that experience with them, parents can provide their children with a lifelong gift – the gift of charity. This article explores the importance of teaching children about charitable giving and

its benefits, as well as provides tips on ways to teach the art of giving.

Why it's Important

Children need to experience charitable giving from an early age. When preschoolers help parents distribute clothes to a homeless shelter, for example, they become aware that others aren't as fortunate as they are. Also, by making a small, positive difference in the lives of others, children start to feel good about themselves. Giving is an excellent way to build character and create well-rounded adults.

Teaching children about giving is a way of sharing values that are

important to a family, whether it be about caring for the homeless or helping keep the environment clean. When taking your child along to help feed homeless people at a local soup kitchen, for instance, it's a concrete way of letting your child experience the importance of caring for people who are in less fortunate circumstances. When parents practice charitable giving as part of the family's philosophy, children are more convinced of its importance.

In a consumerist culture children need to learn that money isn't everything. Donating money to charity or to help protect endangered species is, of course, one admirable way of teaching children about



contributing towards a better society. However, youngsters need to know that there are countless ways of making a positive difference in the lives of others. Serving food to the elderly, collecting clothes for the homeless or distributing toys to poor children are ways in which children can learn about the value of giving time and effort instead of money.

Wonders of Giving

The benefits of teaching children about charity are vast. They include:

- It helps to counteract any child's natural narcissism; the automatic "give me" or "I want" reaction children show when out shopping

- with parents or when watching TV.
- Giving to those who are less fortunate is a potent way to help the giver feel good about themselves; seeing others express gratitude for what they receive builds self-confidence.
- It helps children grow up to become caring adults who realize that their own well-being can be enhanced by helping others.
- Children learn about responsibility and how to appreciate and care for what they have.
- It's also a way in which youngsters learn about the importance of empathy; showing it brings profound joy to those that give and receive.
- Children learn that developing character and identity is not determined by how much they can buy, but how much they can give.

Making a Difference

Ideally, parents should lead by example and teach children that giving isn't a one-off but that the spirit of giving is a life-long way of being. Here are some suggestions on how to instil this attitude in your children:

- 1 Teach children to donate.**
Over time toys and clothes accumulate that children outgrow and no longer use. Let your child know that instead of throwing these away, a better alternative is to give the items to others that might need them. Make sure your child goes with you when you drop off your donation, and encourage them to hand over some of the items themselves.

- 2 Ask for your child's input.**
Children will become more interested in giving when parents involve them in decisions about what to give and to whom. It will help them feel good if parents offer suggestions and ask them to choose whether to, for example, organize a toy collection at school or collect and read books for people in hospital.

- 3 Praise your child's altruism.**
When your child makes suggestions about charitable acts, encourage them with praise. Let them know that you are prepared to help if they need assistance.

- 4 Allowance money can foster charity.** Children who get a regular allowance have the chance to learn to give a certain amount to charity on a regular basis. As part of teaching children about money management, parents can instil the idea of dividing allowance money into portions for spending, saving and sharing.

- 5 It's not about the money.**
As well as donating clothes, toys, books or other items, children can be shown that giving their time and energy to a worthy cause is another way to share of themselves. Children understand the message behind giving better when walking the neighbors' dog, raking leaves in their backyard, or handing out food parcels. Giving money or cheques to charity is too abstract an act for many children to understand.

- 6 Birthdays can be charitable occasions.** At your child's next birthday party, encourage guests to bring items like books or clothing for purposes of donation to the homeless or local charity. Talk about the idea to your child, explain your intention, and get their consent; birthdays are great opportunities to teach children about the value of receiving and giving.

When parents teach children about giving, they empower them to help make society a better place and pave the way to a brighter future. Giving to others can become a way of life, and the earlier children experience positive feelings and feedback about their selfless acts, the more they and others can benefit. 