

COUNSELING DEPARTMENT

Teaching Children That it is Better to Give Than to Receive

The warm and fuzzy feeling we get when we give someone a gift that makes them happy is priceless. Maybe we worked hard to find the perfect gift for that person. Maybe we had to save enough money to purchase that special gift. Or maybe we put a lot of thought and effort into making it perfect for that special person. Either way, we become excited to see their reaction and it makes us feel fulfilled when it all goes well. Giving isn't all about presents. It can be about giving your time and energy to others as well. We can give our children the gift of our attention by spending time with them, playing with them, or even having an intimate conversation with them. We can give through acts of kindness to others. Kindness has been noted to be the greatest gift we can give to others. The act of giving can also be done through charity and donation. The process of helping children to understand that it is better to give than to receive can be difficult. After all, who doesn't like to receive a gift, right? However, teaching your children this valuable lesson is one of the most rewarding things you can give them. It in and of itself is a gift that will last a lifetime.

Here are a few ways to help your children to understand:

- Start small, especially if you are working with very young children. An example might be making cookies for a sick friend. Let your child know that he or she is doing something nice for the friend, even though your child may want to keep the cookies for him/herself.
- Have children engage in arts and crafts that they can enjoy and create for others. Handmade gifts come truly from the heart. Any young child who hands you a drawing or a home-made craft is just looking to make you smile.
- Teach children that money isn't necessary in order to give. They can wash a car, do the dishes without being asked, or even make breakfast in bed. These things don't require money, but still bring a smile to the recipient's face.
- Let your child be involved in deciding who will benefit from the gift. Maybe you've given to the cancer research society for years, but your child heard about a need at the local pet shelter. By allowing them to help with the decision, they feel important and learn the value of giving to those who are less fortunate. The act of giving and wanting to be a part of helping becomes their internal motivation.
- Children learn by watching their most influential role model: YOU. Let your children be a part of your acts of kindness toward others. Engage in conversations that teach the importance of caring for others. Speak to children about the true meaning of the holidays and how giving will always surpass the act of getting. Let your children see you engaging in kind and charitable acts. For example, if you volunteer at a local soup kitchen, when your child is old enough, let them go with you and start helping.

The Gift of *Empathy*

What is Empathy?

The action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objective manner.

In other words...

The ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

How to Accept Others Through Empathy

Acceptance is the ability to see that others have a right to be their own unique self. They have a right to their own feelings, thoughts, and opinions. Accepting other people can be difficult, especially in diverse environments like schools. By developing the skills of **empathy** in your environment, you can help bridge the gap between different backgrounds.

Strategies to Accepting Others Using Empathy

- ◇ BE OPEN-MINDED! Sometimes it can be hard to understand others when they are different from you, but if you are willing to learn about others' expressive qualities it can help you show empathy and accept others for their unique qualities.
- ◇ LISTEN! Be present when communicating with someone. Maintain positive body language, verbal and nonverbal, so the person you are talking with feels heard.
- ◇ SHARE! When you feel comfortable, share experiences, feelings, and/or thoughts that relate to what the other person is sharing to help them feel that you understand.
- ◇ AFFECTION! Sometimes, if you know the person well enough that it would be appropriate, you can offer physical affection such as a hug or hand on the shoulder to create the connection that words may not.
- ◇ MINDFULNESS! Be aware of your surroundings and how the person you are with may be responding to the different sights and sounds around them. Try to not label their responses as "bad" or "good", rather be mindful of how the surroundings might be impacting them.
- ◇ NOT QUICK TO JUDGE! Try to gain a deeper understanding of what someone is expressing before casting judgement on that person or their situation. Taking this time can give you the opportunity to show acceptance even if you don't agree with their perspective.
- ◇ HELP! Offering help to someone can show that you are willing to take time out of your day to do something for someone else without asking for something in return. The gesture of offering can show empathy even if the person doesn't take the offer.
- ◇ CHALLENGE YOUR ASSUMPTIONS! Ask yourself why your thoughts and/or beliefs may be based on stereotypes, stigmas, or biases. Educate yourself on any assumptions you make to gain more awareness of and broaden how you see the world.

How to be Accepting During the Holidays?

The holiday season doesn't always have to mean giving gifts that have monetary value. A gift can be something that isn't bought or seen but instead, felt and heard. The holidays can be difficult for people for many different reasons, so showing empathy can sometimes mean even more to those who want to be accepted because they feel understood and thought of.

- **THE GIFT OF YOUR TIME!** Reach out to friends and family, talk more with those you care about and those who may want more support from you.
- **THE GIFT OF GIVING!** Donating and volunteering can be great ways to offer your support and show you care to those who may have needs different from your own. Accepting that others have different circumstances and helping those in need can be a great way of being empathetic!
- **THE GIFT OF PATIENCE!** Showing empathy can be difficult to understand at first, but with the willingness to accept differences, others can notice your efforts and show their appreciation.
- **THE GIFT OF KINDNESS!** When you show empathy it can show your willingness to be kind to others and what they are going through. You can show kindness through a smile, a nice compliment or listening and communicating with them when they need support.

Empathy Quotes

Empathy is seeing with the eyes of another, listening with the ears of another, and feeling with the heart of another

Alfred Adler



The Greatest
Gift you can
give someone is
your time,
your attention,
your love,
your concern.

-Joel Osteen

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