

COUNSELING DEPARTMENT



How do we teach our children the true spirit of the holidays?

The first step is to not force the issue. You can always teach your kids about the joy of giving, but you cannot force them to adopt it. Be an example and do something selfless this holiday season. Being a model of generosity and kindness is vital to helping kids internalize those values. If you want your kids to join you in your mission, be an example to them. Often times, children become very self-centered and driven by what is in it for them during the holidays. They count down the days in anticipation of what will be given to them. It isn't often that they sit back and think of those whose holiday may not be as bright and indulgent. It's time to help shift their mindset. There is a special joy in giving back and learning to replace selfish motives with selfless ones. Ask them to accompany you to a food pantry, shelter, donation facility, or nursing home. Make it a new family tradition. When they see you in the act, they will learn about the joy of giving back selflessly.

Ways to be more selfless this holiday season:

1. Keep gifts minimal and don't overindulge

The holiday season has placed a strong emphasis on gifts; however, you can alter that pattern this year. Ask your child to donate their 'gift' or talent in making the less fortunate happy. By encouraging your child to be a little more selfless this holiday, you are kindling the right spirit. Ask them to spend more time with the family, giving the gift of their time and energy. This is the greatest gift of all. It might not be as exciting as getting an X-Box for Christmas, but it is valued more.

2. The gift of volunteering

How do you teach your kids the real spirit of giving? Encourage them to start small. Encourage your child to visit the nearest nursing home, soup kitchen, food pantry, or volunteer for a day. They can also get involved with making cards, writing letters, or making a care package for the military overseas. Through this, they begin to understand that not everyone will be able to be home for the holidays, surrounded by those they love. Not only is this a great lesson, but it teaches the power of empathy. Initially, children may not want to spend their spare time volunteering. However, they will soon come to realize that selfless deeds will evoke happiness and a feeling of fulfillment.

3. Donate old toys, clothes, books

If your child isn't ready for volunteering, you can always encourage them to donate a few of their old toys, clothes, and/or books as Christmas gifts to those who need them. Encourage children to clean out closets, shelves, and toy bins. They can even wrap them in gift paper and distribute them to those who cannot afford to buy their own.

4. Family matters

There may be family members who are alone during the holiday season. You can take your child to visit them with a small gift or a kind message. A simple phone call to a family member they haven't seen or spoken to in a while goes a long way. Social media, Zoom, and Facetime can make people more accessible. Not only will they feel good, but your child will feel good, too. It's always the small things that matter. Therefore, ask your child to take small steps before undertaking charity work. After all, charity does begin at home. This is one of the best ways to teach your kids to give of themselves during the holidays. Make it a point to involve the entire family when planning to do something special for the less fortunate. When there are adults leading the way, children will learn to follow. Practice small selfless acts throughout the season to make your teens understand the true message of the holidays long after it's gone.



Teaching students how to give back: Sixth grade CASS (Creating a Safe School) mentors volunteered their time at Santa's Secret Shop to help our youngest shoppers select gifts for their loved ones.

