



Teaching Children about Charitable Giving

Teaching kids about financial literacy is something parents should make a priority early in the lives of their children. Before they can take those steps though, parents should educate their children about the need for and benefits of money. Along those lines, they should also relate the importance of giving to others less fortunate. Charitable contributions—even little ones—can make a big difference in a child’s community, and they don’t always have to be monetary.

Charitable involvement has been shown to help raise the self-esteem in children (and adults). It can help develop social skills and teach children about the world around them. It can also teach children to appreciate the life and belongings that they have.

Charitable giving doesn’t have to be monetary. Start small with younger children and introduce them to simple ways they can be charitable to another person. For instance it could be something as simple as a smile at someone on the street, or sending a card to a friend. Older children can keep a lonely relative company or clean up trash at a local park. Adults and children can go through closets and gather clothing or toys and deliver them to a local shelter. Consider volunteering as a family. It’s a great opportunity to show your children the importance of giving back. And remember, children are like sponges and will mimic what their parents do.

You can present children with charitable and volunteer opportunities through their school, church, or community organizations. You can also use a catastrophic event like a hurricane or flood as a teaching moment to offer children opportunities to learn about charity and reaching out to others in need.

Make being charitable a habit, and help you kids find tasks that make it easy for them to get involved.

- Raking the leaves or shoveling the snow of an elderly neighbor
- Baking bread and delivering it to a homeless shelter
- Making treats and sending them to a service member serving overseas
- Creating meal baskets for the less fortunate during the holidays
- Consider engaging all the birthday guests in the giving activity and ask them to also bring something to donate.

It’s important that you talk about the charitable giving with your children afterwards. Share with them who benefited from their donations and how. It makes it very real and tangible for your children. Make sure they feel appreciated for their actions; their reward is your feedback. It will encourage them to want to donate or volunteer in the future. They also get the satisfaction of helping others and learning to put off their own needs in favor of someone else’s needs.

When your children are interested in and ready to donate monetarily (perhaps a portion of their weekly allowance), help them determine what percentage they’d like to give (ten percent is a good rule of thumb). Also help them identify one or two places where they will give the money. Let your child decide what’s important to them and help them find charities that meet their objectives. For instance, does your child want to help fight disease, and if so, which one? Does he/she want to help feed the hungry, help stray animals, or perhaps support the arts?



Helping your child hone in on their giving will make it easier for them to give. You can help younger children visualize the process by assisting them in creating and decorating a “giving jar” to collect their monetary donations or create a charity goal in FamilyMint. This will help reinforce the idea that the money is set-aside for a special purpose. When the money reaches a predetermined amount (say, \$10 or \$15), you can assist the child in giving it to their chosen charity(s).

According to Carol Weisman, author of *Raising Charitable Children*, “Kids are capable of understanding caring and giving at the tender age of three or four.” Make the giving experience more real for your children by visiting the charities or organizations your children donate to, if possible. If you can’t visit the charity or organization in person, help your child learn more about them on the Internet. This will help your child better understand the impact of his/her giving. Seeing another’s plight can help children realize and appreciate the things that they have, and the way their lives have been blessed.

Monetary giving is a great thing and is something that children should learn as they head down the road of financial literacy. However, remember that charitable giving doesn’t always have to be monetary. Start small, be creative, and watch your child evolve into an adult that embraces financial literacy but also has genuine care and concern for the community around them.