

### Fostering Giving in your Family All Year Long

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Sarah here. We hope you read last week's blog and are using the tips that Lisa provided to de-stress your holidays! For many families, a natural part of enjoying time together at the holidays is the giving and receiving of gifts. Presents are great! But it's also possible that giving gifts—especially for kids—goes overboard, involves spending far more money than intended, creates unnecessary stress, and can contribute to kids becoming gluttonous little goblins. While kids love receiving...gifts, attention, money...you name it...*it's also important for kids to learn to love giving*. Helping your kids focus on giving—gifts, time, money, acts of service— throughout the year, not just at the holidays, can help prevent them from becoming self-centered, materialistic, and entitled.



Not sure how to encourage a sense of giving and generosity in your kids? We've got you covered with some parent-tested, kid-approved ideas. Some strategies can be implemented now (in the winter holiday season), and others can be implemented year-round.

Because your kids will likely be receiving gifts this holiday season, you'll need to make room for their new things. Rather than playroom organization being *your* job or being a fight, why not frame this as a way to give to others? My daughter has a tough time giving things away- she is incredibly sentimental about items, and she doesn't want to hurt anyone's feelings (i.e., the people who gave her the toys or books she's getting rid of). This year, we talked about going through her toys and deciding what she was ready to share with other kids. Rather than

focusing on her *losing* things, we focused on the other kids *gaining* things that they'd love as much as she had. It worked like a charm. We worked incredibly hard for 2 days and over time, giving got easier. She got excited about the idea of other kids getting to enjoy things that she had once loved AND she felt really good about herself. As a bonus, we cleaned her playroom AND bedroom without one argument.

If you don't already have an "Elf on the Shelf" tradition in your household, why not try something different? Rather than the elves monitoring your kids' behavior for Santa, you could start a "Kindness Elf" tradition. A neighbor (thank you, Carol, for being a rock star, as always!) shared this amazing idea with me. Santa sent 2 special "Kindness Elves" to their house. Rather than playing pranks, or being Santa's watchers, the Kindness Elves appear and leave ideas for ways to give to others and choose kindness (e.g., baking for someone, donating gently used toys or clothes, helping a friend clean up, etc.). In turn, the kids can also leave notes for the elves to take to Santa that describe ways they have chosen kindness, generosity, and gratitude (at the holidays or anytime in the year).

In discussing the "Kindness Elf" idea, Lisa and I thought that it could be taken in a slightly different direction. Regardless of your family's religious/spiritual/cultural practices, we really like the idea of having a physical object that could remain visible in the house year-round and could serve as a symbol of and reminder for kindness, giving and generosity. Whether that symbol is an Elf, a stuffed animal or figurine, a photograph, a painting, a collage, or something else entirely, consider having a visible cue to encourage giving.



I genuinely love giving gifts. I especially love making things. It makes me feel good to know that I created something unique just for a particular person. That form of giving comes naturally to me. What comes naturally to you and your kids? Do you prefer giving a physical item or do you prefer a giving act? This week, think about ways you already enjoy giving- it could be creative gestures, time spent, acts of service, words of affirmation, charitable giving, or something else. If you don't have a good read on what comes naturally to your kids in terms of gift-giving, ask. If they don't know, try out different kinds of giving and see what works for them. Start where you already are- use your (and your kids') natural strengths and talents to support giving. Giving will help you and your kids focus on others—outside of your immediate family—and helping other people just feels good!

