

Parenting *ideas*

INSIGHTS

Building parent-school partnerships

WORDS Michael Grose

Show some kindness and gratitude this festive season

The festive season provides the opportunity to develop a sense of other in your children and teach them some social graces.

My wife is a formidable person.

One Christmas, annoyed by the lack of gratitude shown by some of her young relatives when gifts were distributed, she put a cunning plan in action.

The following year, instead of toys, games and assorted gifts that were ungratefully received and promptly forgotten, each of her young relatives was given a card, thanking them for their generous donation of a goat, a well, or a vegetable plot to a family in need in a developing country. A seismic shift for many of these children!

Some years later, said children know exactly what to expect from their senior relative – the only surprise will be the nature of their donation. Chicken or goat? Hoe or bag of seeds?

They also know that they should thank their senior relative for their gift, and be grateful that somewhere in another part of the world someone is benefiting from their generosity. Some children may take more convincing than others, but so be it. They don't miss out on much!

A challenging time

It can be tricky for parents during the end of year festive and holiday season to guide children down a giving, let alone spiritual path. So much attention is placed on receiving that it can be difficult to develop a sense of 'other' in children. It helps to be proactive and put rituals of generosity in place, which will inevitably become part of your family's traditions.

Here are some ideas to get you thinking:

1 Develop an action of gratitude

Discuss with children the people who have been helpful, kind or gone out of their way for them during the year. Then they can write a note, make a gift or cook something that they can give to those people to say thank you. Make it personal and make it physical.

2 Make a family commitment of giving

Pick a cause that's close to your family's heart and make a commitment to do something or give something on a regular basis throughout the coming year. One-off events can lose meaning, whereas all-year volunteering or giving has greater impact on both the giver and the receiver.

3 Involve kids in personal giving

If gifts are shared as part of your tradition then do your best to involve children in the giving process. Discuss the choice of gifts: "So what do you think your cousin would like?". Even better, get your kids to accompany you on a shopping trip, if you dare. It would be a good learning experience for them.

4 Have a clean out

Approaching the festive season provides a great opportunity for kids to spring clean their toy, clothes and technology cupboards. Not only

does this make room for the new, (and perhaps unfairly lift their expectations), but it provides the chance for children to pass on unwanted items to siblings, friends or others who would probably appreciate and use them more than they would.

5 Give them a social script

Children usually operate on a script learnt from their parents. If you want them to be thankful for their gifts then give them the lines they should use. Be prepared for some gentle parental cueing if in all the festive excitement they forget to say thanks. And while you're at it, I suggest that you avert potential embarrassment and give them some lines to use when they open the inevitable weird present, or receive a gift they already have. "I've got two of those already!" is not the sound a beaming and generous relative needs to hear!

The festive and holiday season offers many social challenges for parents. In many ways, the biggest challenge is to instil in your kids some social graces and a generous spirit that will withstand the unique challenges that the festive season throws up. Good luck, be good and be grateful!

Michael Grose



Stay one step ahead of your kids with great ideas & expert advice from Michael Grose. Join Michael's **NEW Parentingideas Club** today at parentingideasclub.com.au. You'll be so glad you did.



parentingideas.com.au

