

THE GIVING CHILD

The holiday season provides parents with plenty of opportunities to teach children the art of giving and the satisfaction that it brings.

We see the Salvation Army bell ringers in front of many stores. In places of prayer and worship giving and kindness to others are frequent topics of discussion. Food drives are held by numerous associations. Television commercials abound asking for money for special causes.

In a recently released book “The Giving Book” Ellen Sabine helps us to promote a giving behavior in our children by keeping in mind five essential ingredients.

The first way, is to get the child involved in something that interests them. If they love dogs, they can help by giving to the Humane Society. Almost anything a child likes can be taken a step further by helping this program or association to advance its cause by giving to it. When the child has a special interest it makes it easier and more natural for them to help it out by doing something special for it.

Another way, to get your child interested and active at home is to work with them on a special project that will be given to someone after it is completed. Making personal Christmas cards for seniors is one way. Arts and crafts stores are full of possibilities to purchase something that can be made at home and then given away. The process itself brings the parent and child closer together while teaching them the satisfaction that comes with giving to others.

Ellen Sabine has a wonderful suggestion of volunteering you and your child’s time to something or for some group of people that you really care about. The act of volunteering, whether it be for a girl scout drive, or at a charity event, or other worthy cause, helps children to become

more aware that one of the most powerful acts of giving is the giving of time.

Sharing your things, is another way to get a child involved in showing kindness towards others. If you are like our family, we have plenty of items that can be packed up and given to families in need. Food, clothes, toys, and blankets are all options most of us have and can put together with little effort. I believe that toys, because they are the most personal to a child, is one of the best selections.

As Ellen states in her book, making a donation, is another example of helping others and getting into the holiday spirit. One of the examples she uses which I like, is the act of filling a box full of can goods. Every week, take one canned good that you buy at the store and put it in a special box at home. Let your child pick out what can good goes in the box. When the box is full all of you can take it to the local food pantry or shelter. Make it an event by talking about how the box is getting fuller each week and where they want to take it when ready.

The more you make it fun, the more enjoyment a child will have in doing it. At our Center, the teachers let the child ring a gong every time the teacher sees an act of kindness given toward another child. Kids get caught up in thinking of acts to let them ring the gong which promotes kindness. And every time the gong rings the rest of the children are reminded that some child acted kindly towards another. Some children even ask what they can do to ring the gong.

As we try to cram everything into the holiday season, these tips might give you a needed break from the holidays. More than likely, it will also make you feel good as well as your children. Who knows, it may even enrich your own feeling for the holiday season along with your child's.