

# Helping children develop a social conscience

**Those children who freely share** their time, space and possessions are generally happier and have more friends than those children who are mean-spirited. The following five principles will help you develop a sense of generosity in your children.

## Principle 1: Model generosity

If you asked your children about the charitable behaviours they observed in you, how would they reply? It is sometimes difficult to see yourself through the eyes of your children, but this is the true test of character and individual self worth.

## Principle 2: Provide opportunities for children to feel they are helping others

Helping others strengthens children's self esteem and instills in them the belief that they can contribute to the well-being of others. Brooks and Goldstein\* advocate that children should be given one activity at the age of three that becomes their responsibility. This is the beginning of a child's contribution to the well-being of others.

## Principle 3: Develop traditions to become a charitable family.

A charitable family develops a tradition of involving the entire family in helping and bettering the lives of others. Such activities indicate to children that they can do something

to alleviate the difficulties of others and promote a sense of connectedness to a community that is larger than their family.

## Principle 4: Distribute jobs at home evenly.

The opportunity for children to help at home teaches them that contribution is a natural part of living within a group or community. Most of the significant lessons about living are learned in the family home.

## Principle 5: Recognise that each child contributes in their own way

If you think that your child doesn't help, or that one child in your family is exceedingly generous with his or her contribution while another always seems to drag the chain, step back a little and observe from a distance. You may find it a revelation that the child who appears less helpful actually does a great deal more than you realised.

*\* Ideas in this piece were based on the book Raising Resilient Children by Robert Brooks and Sam Goldstein*



## Quick Parenting Quiz

1. **Which statements show the listener is helping a child develop a vocabulary for his or her emotions?**

- Cheer up. It's not that bad.
- Get over it.
- I'd be mad if that happened to me.
- You seem really angry about being left off the team.

2. **Physically, childhood is getting shorter.**

True or false

- Answers: 1 c) and d)  
2 true. Children in Western countries are increasingly reaching puberty at an earlier age.

## Vitamins for parents

Three ideas to help your family be more charitable:

- Give used toys that are in good condition to someone else
- Either individually or join with other families to sponsor a child from a developing country
- Invite guests to celebrate special occasions such as Christmas, Easter and birthdays.

## Bright idea



## Community help

Help an individual or a group in your community that needs assistance. Whether it is attending a working bee, walking a neighbour's dog or taking the rubbish bins out for someone, there are opportunities everywhere for you and your children to help.

## Wise & Witty Words

"It is in the shelter of each other that people live."

*Irish proverb*

"One of the reasons why adults should look as if they are having fun, is to give kids a reason to want to grow up."

*Patch Adams*