

INSIGHTS

by Michael Grose - Australia's No 1 parenting educator

Keep the spirit of generosity alive

Developing a sense of sharing in kids is really important for their future relationships as well as the well-being of our communities.

If there was one positive to come out of the terrible Victorian bushfires it was the astounding response of ordinary Australians to the plight of the bushfire victims. It seemed everyone wanted to do something to ease their burden.

Helping out wasn't just left up to adults. Kids of all ages did their bit. It seems there wasn't a school that didn't have a sausage sizzle, free dress day or fund-raiser of some type. Kids everywhere passed on used toys, donated their pocket money, or volunteered to help in any way they could.

I heard the story of a nine year old whose mum went into his bedroom to growl at him for being up too late. She found him busy emptying his money box into little plastic bags, ready to donate at the school bushfire appeal next day. This mother was pretty chuffed as she knew the money box represented over 6 months pocket money, including Christmas contributions. She then helped him look through his drawers for any coins that he may have missed. There are plenty of stories like this showing the generosity of Australian kids.

The trick now is to keep alive this spirit of generosity that has been triggered by this tragedy. With families shrinking, kids get fewer opportunities to help others than before. They are less likely to help out at home without being paid.

And of course, young children are egocentric by nature so giving is not exactly a high priority for them. But part of a parent's job is to remind children that the world doesn't revolve around them.

In the eagerness to get kids off to a good start in life, a spirit of generosity is one quality that parents can easily overlook. Developing independence and personal competencies tend to be higher on most parents' wish lists for their kids.

But developing a sense of sharing in kids is really important for their future relationships as well as the well-being of our communities. Children who are able to share their time, space and possessions generally have more friends and experience more success than those who are self-centred and mean-spirited.

Like most facets of child-rearing developing a community ethos in kids' can be a frustrating task but perseverance and modeling are parents' greatest allies when it comes to things that really matter.



Here are four practical ways to keep the spirit of generosity alive in your kids:

1. Encourage them to give toys, books and clothes away when they have finished with them.
2. Expect them to do at least one job at home each day that's not tied to pocket-money.
3. Ask them to put away a small amount of pocket-money each week for charity or to help others.
4. Encourage them to visit, or even help, an elderly or sick neighbor, if safe to do so.

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