

# 8 ways to help kids develop caring mindsets

**“FIND A PROJECT THAT MATCHES YOUR CHILD’S INTERESTS, ABILITIES AND PASSIONS TO HELP THEM REALIZE THAT THEY ARE A DIFFERENCE MAKER.”**

– MICHELE BORBA

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*From our guest contributor, Michele Borba.*

**REALITY CHECK:** 93 percent of adults feel we are failing to instill values in children. What’s more, “being kind and caring” isn’t even high on our kids’ priority lists! Two-thirds of adolescents ranked their own personal happiness as more important than their goodness. It’s time to help our kids switch their focus from Selfie to Unselfie and see themselves as caring, compassionate people.

As in most families, each of my sons has different interests, skills, and strengths. To have all of them involved in the same giving to others project wouldn’t have been wise. So my husband and I tried to encourage each child to find a project that matched his concerns and talents. Not only did they enjoy volunteering, but were more committed to their causes. And all three boys caught that “Helper’s High” and continue to want to give back to others. Here are ways to match your child’s interests, passions and strengths with volunteer projects:

**1. Likes to read, write, tell stories:** Offer to read or write letters for young kids, the elderly, or people with disabilities; start a letter-writing campaign about an issue that concerns him; be a pen pal with an orphan overseas, donate used books to a library, homeless shelter, or classroom.

**2. Enjoys sports, theatre, gymnastics, or dance:** Help coach younger children in dancing, gymnastics, a favorite sport, or acting, volunteer for the Special Olympics; help students with disabilities at a local school; repair toys for needy or sick kids; sew blankets for a shelter.

**3. Is original, enjoys working alone to pursue own interests and goals:** "Adopt" someone who could use a friend such as an elderly person; teach a special hobby—magic, juggling, art—to needy kids; ask permission to start a food drive at the parents' workplace or community.

**4. Enjoys being with others, likes joining or leading groups:** Start a club and make snacks for homeless kids or soup for a shelter; put together a walk-a-thon donate proceeds to a local charity; go door-to-door with a parent and friends collecting warm clothes to give to homeless.

**5. Is musical, plays instruments, likes to sing:** Play an instrument at nursing homes; organize sing-alongs at a shelter or assisted living; teach needy kids to play an instrument.

**6. Is logical and mathematics, enjoys science and math, likes to figure things out:** Tutor math, science, or computers to younger children; play chess or checkers to kids at a hospital; make flyers asking for specific donations to a shelter and post in the community.

**7. Likes to draw and design, imaginative and creative:** Paint or hang up hand-painted pictures at a shelter, make greeting cards and deliver them to a hospital; do craft projects with the elderly.

**8. Likes the out-of-doors and nature:** Plant vegetables then donate the harvest to soup kitchen or shelter; help kids at a shelter plant a garden; clean up a park, plant trees on school grounds

Find a project that matches your child's interests, abilities and passions to realize he is a difference maker.



Dr. Michele Borba is an educational psychologist, parenting expert, TODAY show contributor and author of 22 books including *The Big Book of Parenting Solutions: 101 Answers to Your Everyday Challenges and Wildest Worries* and *UnSelfie: Why Empathetic Kids Succeed in Our All-About-Me World*.

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