

Managing Stress: Part 5

It's important to set aside time to reflect on how you're managing stress.

Managing Stress: Part 4

Is your mind ready for stress?

Managing Stress: Part 3

What are actions that you need to take when you are experiencing stress in the moment?

Managing Stress: Part 2

A key part of managing stress is mindset.

Managing Stress: Part 1

In a time of great uncertainty, our ability to identify and manage stress is critically important. Over the next five days, we will share strategies to help you manage your stress during these challenging times. If you follow along, by the end of the week, you can create a personal plan to manage your stress.

A Dave Kinnoin concert

Chances are if you've enjoyed songs by Mickey Mouse, Kermit the Frog, Winnie the Pooh, Big Bird, Ariel, Jasmine, Belle, Sebastian the Crab, and Larry the Cucumber, you know Dave Kinnoin. Dave has written songs for some of the most beloved characters in movies and on television.

In addition to writing for his character friends, Dave has released eight solo albums. He is half of the acclaimed songwriting/recording duo Randy & Dave, who have won numerous awards and landed on many Top 10 lists. He is also the brains behind the group Grin Brigade.

Dave is well-known for his acts of kindness and generosity. As a volunteer, he builds structures in Mexico, Haiti, and elsewhere for struggling families and communities with OneSmallHouse.org and writes songs for sick children with SongsOfLove.org.

Enjoy this special concert from Dave.

Dave has been involved with CHARACTER COUNTS! for 10 years. He performs assemblies, wrote the CHARACTER COUNTS! Week theme

song and jingles, and produced the CD *CHARACTER COUNTS! Strikes a Chord*.

Civility and COVID-19

Just four weeks ago, we were all going to work, planning spring break vacations, looking forward to graduation ceremonies, and walking into grocery stores assured that we could purchase every item on our list. Today, we are all dealing with challenges none of us expected just a month ago.

Six Ways to Help Your Child (and Yourself) Build a Positive Mindset



It's easy to get caught up in the stress of everyday life. Here's a few tips to keep a positive mindset.

1. Be Grateful – at some point during your day (perhaps at dinner) ask each member of your family to say three things that they are grateful for today. Ask them to make their answers specific to today. For example, saying “I’m grateful for my family,” isn’t specific to today. Saying, “I’m grateful that I have a dad who read with me today,” is specific.
2. Journaling – ask your child to spend five minutes journaling about something they are thankful for from that day. Journaling about a positive experience allows us to relive the experience, which helps us build a positive mindset (while also working on writing skills).
3. Exercise – studies show that exercise helps our brains feel more positive.
4. Meditation – simple meditation exercises help our brains de-clutter and focus. Apps like Headspace can help you get started with meditation.
5. Random Acts of Kindness – we can always do nice things for others – either in our family or community.
6. Connection– reach out to friends and family via text, phone, video chat, or even old-fashioned letters.

Learn more about character education.

The Artful act of Giving



From guest contributors Dr. Michele Borba and Dr. Marilyn Price-Mitchell

Much like the creative inspiration that flows through paint brushes and words of poetry, giving is an artful expression of caring for someone or something beyond ourselves.

Most of us learn the art of giving in our childhoods. I remember how my mother coordinated a neighborhood bake-off so we could take sweet holiday treats to our local nursing home. With several other families, we delivered trays of goodies and sang carols for the residents. I remember how I felt as I witnessed gratitude through the eyes of elderly patients, some

of whom could not speak.

I quietly observed the hours of love stitched into the colorful wool mittens knitted by my grandmother, a project she worked on throughout the year. And then, just after Thanksgiving, I'd help her take those love-filled mittens to a children's shelter. Yes, the mittens were artful pieces of craftsmanship, but the expression of caring behind the mittens was an illustration of something much bigger.

These childhood experiences were almost 60 years ago. But they still flood my senses every year at the holidays even though my parents and grandparents have long since passed. Those meaningful memories of giving became a part of who I am.

What I know today as a developmental psychologist that I didn't know as a child is how important learning to give is to the health of our relationships, our wellbeing, and even how we engage in our communities. In my book, *Tomorrow's Change Makers: Reclaiming the Power of Citizenship for a New Generation*, I share stories from civically-engaged young people who reflected on their growing up years and how they learned the art of giving.

Speaking of her father, Danielle, age 21 said, "He never saw social barriers. He saw people's needs and he acted on them, no matter what background they had, no matter their circumstances. He was never afraid to get his hands dirty." Danielle's father was her inspiration, the person from whom she learned the art of giving—actions that flow from within to make a difference in other people's lives.

Parents not only shape how children give to their communities, they also shape how families give to each other and the positive relationships that evolve from those actions.

Four Ways to Shape Lifelong Habits of Giving

The following are four ways you can inspire children to become

givers, shaping their lifelong values about giving, family, and citizenship:

1. Give Voice to the Meaning of Gift Giving

You can help children become more mindful about gift giving simply by encouraging them to think, voice their thoughts, and then act on them. Engage children in open-ended questions that dig more deeply into the meaning behind giving, like:

- If gifts could talk, what would they say?
- What gifts have you treasured most? Why?
- What does a gift really mean?
- If there is an art of giving, what does that art look like for you?
- What is a gift you would never return?
- How do you measure the value of a gift?

2. Turn Your Family Values into Action

Discussions about giving can lead to identifying and articulating family values. Turning those values into action is a key to shaping children's personal art of giving. Decide as a family how your values can be transformed into holiday gifts for family and friends. What kinds of gifts shared between family members and close friends are most meaningful? Decide on gifts that will bring this meaning to you and your children's lives. Don't be afraid to make changes from previous years and adapt to changing economic times.

3. Connect the Art of Giving to Stewardship

It takes the combined efforts of families, schools, and communities to raise caring citizens and stewards of the planet. Families play a vital role when they help children connect the art of giving to lifelong citizenship. There are thousands of ways children and families learn to give throughout the year that shape a child's identity and personal art of giving. We are stewards to each other and the natural

world around us. You can help children discover the daily ways they act as givers to their parents, siblings, neighbors, the earth, and those in need around the world by recognizing their small but significant gift-giving actions. Parents can bring meaning to these actions through family conversation starters like:

- How is doing chores around the house connected to giving?
- What does it mean to leave a flower or light a candle in remembrance of a person who has died? How does this action connect with giving?
- How can we practice our family values by cultivating the art of giving in our home?
- What do we most want from our family relationships? How would those wishes be gifts to each of us?
- How is recycling (and other conserving behaviors) a gift to the earth? Why should we care?

4. Engage Children in Community Giving Projects

Children mostly associate the holidays with being *receivers* of gifts. But according to studies in human development, it is *gift giving* that reaps the biggest psychological rewards. Even very young children can be involved in family projects that help others in your community. Take time. Let your children be creative.

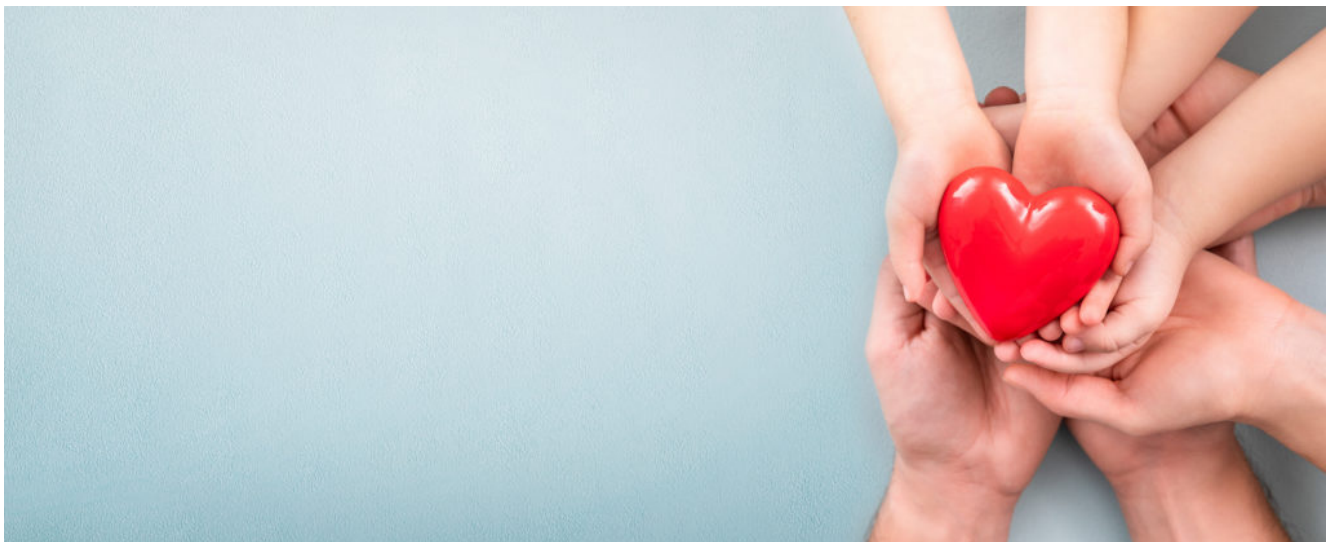
Allow children to *feel* the power of giving. It's that feeling that lasts a lifetime.

Michele Borba, Ed.D. is an internationally renowned consultant, educational psychologist and recipient of the National Educator Award who has presented workshops to over a million participants worldwide. She is a recognized expert in parenting, bullying, youth violence, and character development and author of 22 books including UnSelfie: Why Empathetic Kids Succeed in Our All-About Me World, The 6Rs of Bullying

Prevention: Best Proven Practices to Combat Cruelty and Build Respect, The Big Book of Parenting Solutions, and Building Moral Intelligence. She has appeared over 130 times on the TODAY show and is a frequent expert on national media including Dateline, The View, Dr. Oz, Anderson Cooper, CNN, Dr. Drew, and Dr. Phil. To book her for speaking or media even refer to her website: www.micheleborba.com. Follow her on twitter @MicheleBorba.

Learn more about character education.

Four Secrets to Raising a Compassionate Child



From guest contributor Dr. Michele Borba

Empathy is the trait that helps make the world a kinder and gentler place, and empathy can be developed and improved. Wherever your children fit on the “caring about others” scale, there is always room for improvement. But what are proven ways parents can increase their children’s capacity to be kind and care? I’ve sought that answer for over a decade and

interviewed dozens of leading experts to find it.

Ironically, it was at the site of unimaginable horrors, the Auschwitz concentration camp, where I found a key discovery. At the Auschwitz bookstore, I happened to pick up a book called *The Altruistic Personality*. My copy is now filled with notes and dozens of tabs: it is a fascinating read. And there among those pages, I learned that the answer to evil is empathy. That finding was the catalyst to my writing, *UnSelfie: Why Empathetic Kids Succeed in Our All About Me World*. So, if you ever wonder whether you can instill caring in a child, *you do*.

Seeds of Empathy Are Planted by Parents

The *Altruistic Personality* describes the results of a now-infamous study that showed just how much parents can influence the development of the traits of humanness like caring, compassion, empathy, social responsibility, and kindness. And it was conducted by two social psychologists named Samuel and Pearl Oliner.

Nazis killed Samuel Oliner's family, but a Polish peasant woman named Balwina saved him when he was twelve. "Balwina Piecuch's act of kindness and caring not only saved my life, it formed my life," he later said.

Sam Oliner and Pearl Oliner, his wife, spent the next three decades interviewing more than 1,500 Christians-both non-rescuers and rescuers-who had lived during Nazi-occupied Europe. Their goal was to determine why some, like Balwina, put themselves at great personal risk without external rewards while so many others did not. It is one of the most extensive studies of people who rescued Jews during the Holocaust and why some people care so deeply. The Oliners found several distinctions in rescuers.

First, most rescuers were deeply empathetic: they simply could

not stand by and watch others suffer.

Many also had a strong sense of self-efficacy and believed they could make a difference and help others.

The majority had internalized a strong identity based on caring values and an ethic of social responsibility.

Four Parenting Practices Raise a Compassionate Child

But how did those rescuers acquire those beliefs? “It was how I was parented” was a recurrent response.

There were four practices the rescuers’ parents did that helped instill their caring values.

First: The rescuers’ parents strongly emphasized kindness, and expected their children to apply the value to *all* people.

Second: The rescuers’ parents administered little physical punishment in disciplining their children. They used moral reasoning instead.

Third: The rescuers’ parents tended to have closer relationships with their children than did the bystanders’ parents, and were felt to be warmer and more supportive.

Fourth: The rescuers’ parents modeled caring behavior in their interaction with people outside the family.

In contrast, non-rescuers were far more centered on their own needs or felt obliged to help only a small circle of others. Their parents were also more likely to stress monetary values (“Be thrifty,” “Get a good job”) than caring, moral concerns.

Are You Modeling What You Want Your Child

to Catch?

When it comes to raising compassionate children, parenting does matter. But it's not buying apps, paying for fancy tutors, giving long lectures, or sending kids to pricey camps that cultivate children's hearts. The Oliners would tell us that who we are and what we stand for counts far more than all our long, endless parenting "to do" lists.

"Moral behavior is the consequence of empathy, caring for others, a strong attachment to the moral community, and an ethical obligation to all life. Reaching out to others at considerable personal risk, as Balwina Piecuch did, and as many, many others have done, has been the force behind much that is good in the world. It has saved innumerable lives and inspired new acts of generosity and heroism." – Samuel Oliner

For our children's sake, may we stand for kindness and model empathy.