



# The Mind Hub

By



## Topic: Gift – Giving & Gratitude: Teaching Kids & Adolescents the True Spirit of the Season

As the holiday season approaches, it's a time of excitement, celebration, and, of course, gift-giving. While presents are a fun part of the holidays, they can sometimes overshadow the true spirit of the season—gratitude, generosity, and family connection. This month, we're exploring how to help our children understand and appreciate the deeper meaning of gift-giving, while also fostering gratitude throughout the holiday season.

---

### ❖ **Why Gratitude Matters?**

Gratitude is more than just saying “thank you” when someone gives us a gift. It's about recognizing the positive aspects of our lives, no matter how big or small, and understanding the value of what we have. Research has shown that teaching children gratitude can improve their mental health, increase their empathy, and even boost their happiness. It can also help children develop a more positive outlook on life, as they learn to focus on what they have rather than what they don't.

### ❖ **Tips for Teaching Gratitude & the True Spirit of Gift-Giving**

#### ➤ **Model Gratitude**

Children learn by watching adults, so one of the most effective ways to teach gratitude is by modelling it yourself. Make a habit of expressing thanks for the little things—whether it's a kind gesture from a friend or a beautiful moment in your day. By showing your children how to acknowledge and appreciate the positives, they'll start to pick up on the importance of gratitude in their own lives. Make this part of your daily schedule. Maybe you could also turn this into a fun little game during or after dinner time.

#### ➤ **Give with Intention**

When choosing gifts, encourage your child to think about the person they are giving to. Help them consider the recipient's interests, hobbies, or needs, rather than just picking something at random. You can even involve your child in the process by brainstorming thoughtful, meaningful gift ideas together.

Tip: Have your child make a handmade gift, like a drawing, a piece of art, or a heartfelt letter. These gifts often carry more emotional value than something bought in a store and help children understand that the thought behind the gift is just as important as the gift itself.

➤ **Practice Gratitude Together**

As mentioned earlier, during the holiday season, set aside a few minutes each day for a family gratitude practice. This can be as simple as going around the table at dinner and sharing one thing each person is grateful for. If you'd like, you could create a gratitude jar where everyone writes down something they're thankful for and then reads them aloud on Christmas Eve or New Year's Day. This is a great way to reinforce the habit of focusing on the positive and to help children recognize the blessings in their lives.

➤ **Encourage Acts of Kindness**

Gift-giving doesn't always have to be about material items. Encouraging children to give their time, effort, or kindness to others teaches them the true value of generosity. You can involve your child in volunteer work, like donating toys or food, or even helping a neighbour with holiday decorations. These experiences can be just as rewarding as receiving a gift.

Tip: Consider starting a "12 Days of Giving" tradition where, in the lead-up to Christmas, your child performs one act of kindness each day—whether it's sending a card to a friend, helping a family member with a task, or donating clothes to those in need.

➤ **Help Children Reflect on What They've Received**

After opening presents, take time to talk with your child about the gifts they've received. Encourage them to reflect on what they're most grateful for and why. This helps children develop a deeper understanding of the value of what they've been given, beyond just the material aspect.

➤ **Help Children Set Realistic & New Year's Resolutions**

Actively try to help your children reflect on the past year and think about small, achievable goals for the New Year. Share tips for setting realistic expectations and emphasizing growth and effort over perfection. You can try to wrap the year up with sharing your most favourite memories, your most challenging moments. And of course, by sharing what you are looking forward to in the new year. You can even film each other sharing your new year resolutions and watch it back next year!

---

❖ **FAQs**

1. *Q. How can I avoid turning my child into a "gift-receiver" rather than a "giver"?*

A. One way to help your child focus on the joy of giving is to involve them in the planning and decision-making process of choosing or making gifts. Encourage them to think about the person they're giving to, what that person would appreciate, and how their gift might brighten their day. You can also teach them that the joy of giving comes from making others feel loved and appreciated, rather than receiving something in return.

2. *My child is really excited about getting gifts and often forgets to say thank you. How can I help them?*

A. It's common for kids to get caught up in the excitement of receiving, especially during the holidays. You can gently remind your child to express gratitude by prompting them with phrases like, "What do we say when someone gives us something?" You might also role-play thank-you notes together after the

holidays, as this can be a great way to reinforce the importance of gratitude.

Make it a fun activity, and help them understand that saying thank you makes the giver feel appreciated too.

3. *Q. What if my child seems disappointed with their gifts or shows no enthusiasm?*
  - A. Sometimes children may feel let down if they don't get exactly what they were hoping for. In these moments, it's important to guide them toward gratitude. You can help them refocus by saying something like, "I understand you were hoping for something else, but look at all the wonderful things you have here." It can also help to ask them to focus on the thought behind the gift—what did the giver do to show they care? By encouraging empathy and understanding, your child will gradually learn to appreciate the intention behind the gift, rather than just the item itself. However, this is not a time to invalidate their feelings or punish them for not getting excited about their gifts. The same way they need to show gratitude, so do you.
  
4. *Q. How can I encourage gratitude when my child is feeling overwhelmed by all the holiday activities?*
  - A. The holiday season can sometimes be overwhelming with its many events and expectations. If your child is feeling stressed or fatigued, encourage them to take a step back and have a quiet moment of reflection. Acknowledge their feelings and then help them focus on small, positive things—like enjoying a cozy moment with family or feeling thankful for the time they get to spend together. Practicing gratitude in quieter moments can help your child feel more balanced during the busyness of the season.
  
5. *Q. How can I help my child focus more on the experience of the holidays rather than just the gifts?*

- A. Focus on creating lasting memories and experiences that emphasize family, traditions, and fun rather than just the material aspects of the holiday. Consider doing things like baking cookies together, decorating the house, or participating in community events. Encourage your child to reflect on their favourite memories of past holidays, which can help them shift focus from gifts to the experiences that make the season special. You could also create a new tradition, such as making a family scrapbook or photo album of the year's holiday moments, which gives your child a tangible reminder of what truly matters during the season.
- 

❖ **Final Thoughts.**

The holiday season is a perfect time to teach our children about gratitude, generosity, and the true spirit of gift-giving. By modelling gratitude, encouraging thoughtful giving, and focusing on acts of kindness, we can help our children appreciate the deeper meaning behind the season. Together, we can create a holiday experience that brings more joy, connection, and contentment—not just through the gifts we give, but through the love and thoughtfulness we share.

Wishing you and your family a season filled with warmth, gratitude, and meaningful connections.

If you have any concerns about your child's stress levels or would like further resources, don't hesitate to reach out to the school psychologist.

- The Mind Hub, by Marina Stavrou

