

Over the last fourteen years of working with next generation donors, their families and their advisors, we have had the privilege of learning about their giving traditions and strategies for doing good in the world. These ideas inspired us to collect and share these meaningful and fun family bonding activities for the holiday season. We also invited colleagues from our broad network of professionals to contribute what they have seen work, as well as looking to our own families—those we were born into and those we are raising—as inspiration for the list you will see below. It’s with gratitude to all of these people that we offer the following activities. We hope that you’ll be inspired to engage with your family and community during this season of giving and in the new year.

1. Explore Giving

While you and your family may be eager to enter into meaningful discussions around giving, especially during the holidays, oftentimes it’s difficult to find a place to start. 21/64’s [Exploring Giving](#) is a deck of fifty giving-themed question cards, which offer a fun way to get these important conversations going among family members of all ages. It provides the space for the next generation to voice their never-before-asked questions and an opportunity for parents and grandparents to pass their stories and values onto the next generation.

2. Express Gratitude

Like any habit, gratitude can be cultivated. Ask family members to share three things they are grateful for each day or during special gatherings as the meal begins. The goal of this exercise is to shift the emphasis away from receiving presents and to witness how parents, aunts and uncles model their expressions of gratitude. Feel free to build this practice into a time of day that works best for your family, whether at the dinner table, at bedtime or when you wake up. Over time, you’ll notice that you and your family will start to wear “gratitude glasses,” and seek out the things in each day to be grateful for.

3. Demonstrate Care for Others

Help family members, friends or neighbors who are in need by offering to lend a hand, such as by raking leaves, picking up trash or unpacking groceries. Have the kids in your family look for the ways they can help too, allowing them to notice what the need may be and determine what they can do in response.

Self-direction is empowering and will cultivate their sense of personal generosity and empower their sense of agency.

4. Learn About the World Beyond Ourselves

Take your volunteering outside of your neighborhood; for instance, you can serve meals at a local soup kitchen, pack up toiletries and deliver them to a homeless shelter or build houses for those in need. By going outside the familiar bounds of our day-to-day, we not only help others but also learn that the rest of the world does not always look, act or believe as we do. This creates a connection to and builds empathy for others who are different from us. It expands and diversifies our sense of community, which cultivates humility and self-awareness.

5. Tell Your Family Story

While your family is together for the holidays, take the opportunity to discover and record the stories of your elders by utilizing 21/64's [Grandparent Legacy Project](#) or [What am I Inheriting?](#). Ask these family members questions about the values, lessons learned, successes and challenges that have informed who they are and, by extension, who you are. Make sure to invite the children in your family to also come up with questions they want to ask; not only will this add a bit of levity to the conversation, it will demonstrate what they are curious about.

6. Record Stories for Posterity

It's never too early to capture the stories of loved ones during their lifetimes. As the research by Marshall Duke and Robyn Fivush tells us, children who know their family narratives tend to have greater self-esteem, and children who have internalized the ups and downs of their predecessors demonstrate greater resilience; they discover that if their family members can weather highs and lows, they can too. Find a talented professional to help you audio or video record the storyteller using 21/64's [Legacy Resources List](#) or try [StoryCorps'](#) app to do it yourself.

7. Convey Family Blessings

Invite each member of the family to write a note to every other member of the family, highlighting a nice thing about that person's character or remarking on an admirable gesture they made (e.g. It can be as simple as, "you let me sleep with your teddy bear"). During the holidays, gather everyone around and read the blessings out loud, with each person reading those written to him or her.

8. Family Movie Night

A family movie night is the perfect activity when everyone's together for the holidays. Make a point of not just drinking hot chocolate and eating popcorn, but also debriefing the film, asking each family member to reflect on one example of a positive value they saw acted out by one of the characters (e.g.

The value of Compassion in *The Jungle Book* from when Mowgli sees the baby elephant in trouble and selflessly finds a way to help—not for a reward, but because it’s the right thing to do). Discuss how your family puts its values to work during the holiday season, as well as year-round.

9. Adopt a Family

Reach out to a nearby homeless or family services agency to ask if you can “adopt” a family in need. Pair each of your family members up to each member of your adopted family. Consider asking your children to contribute some of the funds in their piggy bank or *tzedakah* box to help pay for gifts. Wrap them at home together and make an outing of delivering them to the agency, so that your children can learn first-hand the privilege of helping others.

10. Organize a Kid Powered Food Drive

Mobilize your kids and their friends to collect cans and other non-perishable food items from your households, neighbors, classmates or even from local businesses. Have them sort, count, organize and inventory the cans before taking them to the local foodbank where they can unload and stock their donation. Learn how the foodbank receives food supplies and creates a system for serving hundreds (or even thousands) of families throughout the year.

11. Pay it Forward

For each gift received over the holidays, encourage your children, grandchildren, nieces or nephews to pay it forward by giving away one present for every one received. For example, for every new toy, sort out one from the toy closet to give to a child in need. You could also expand the definition of “gifts” beyond tangible presents to include gifts of time, notes, compliments and hugs, so that whoever receives such a gift learns to pay it forward and give one to someone else. They may discover they enjoy the giving as much as the receiving.

12. Ask: What is the Greatest Gift You’ve Ever Been Given?

This is one of those powerful questions that flips the script by getting family members to both ask this question and answer it. Talk about the *experience* of giving and receiving and not just the things one *does* in terms of giving or *what* one receives. As Ron Lieber says in his book, [The Opposite of Spoiled](#), you can inspire generosity by speaking about how much you’ve been given and what that did for you. Check out his website [here](#) to learn more about the benefits of not over-indulging kids during the holidays.

13. Give Directly to People

We would argue that nothing feels better than giving. For a relateable way to contribute funds as a family at the year’s end, log onto a website like [DonorsChoose.org](#) where you can select the classroom, location and type of supplies you want to donate to a teacher trying to run a special project that her

school budget doesn't cover. Or, visit a site like [Heifer International](#) where you can pay for an animal donation to a farmer in the developing world so she can start a business and feed her family from the milk or eggs that the animal supplies.

14. Give as a Family or Group

There is no wrong way to involve your family, particularly your children, in giving. One colleague suggests collecting all the solicitation letters you receive, sorting through them with your family and having everyone, from the eldest to the youngest, contribute some money to a pool. Next, have everyone participate in collecting information about the organizations the family might want to support, reading and sorting through the solicitations based on the criteria the family sets up for what they will and won't fund. Counting the amounts requested and the amount in the pool is a great job for little ones learning math. Then, the group can decide how to allocate the funds with a fun and lively discussion about their [Motivational Values](#). Family members can then place their money next to the organizations they want to support.

15. Craft Your Giving Plan for Next Year

Use some of the down time around the holidays to reflect on what's most meaningful to you and whether you're embracing that in your everyday life. Take a deck of 21/64's [Motivational Values Cards](#) or [Picture Your Legacy](#) cards to a family meal or to sort on your own and prioritize the values that most motivate you and the vision you aspire to live out, respectively. Ask yourself: *Am I living these values? Am I living the vision of my life I see illustrated by the cards? What might I need to put into place next year to achieve this vision? How might I give of my time, talent, treasure and ties to live in alignment with my values? What do I need to put into place to live a fulfilling and meaningful life? Who do I need to help me put this plan in place so that I can effectively help others?* Based on your answers, determine your next steps.

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