

COUNSELING CORNER

Monthly School Newsletter from Lutheran Counseling Services

Car Conversations

In the car, classroom or dinner table, try some of these ideas to build respect in yourself, your family or your class.



◆ Read Proverbs 11:24-25:

"One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. Whoever brings blessings will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered." Discuss how you have seen this in your own lives. What does it tell us about generosity?

◆ Talk as a class or family about what each person can give to others to show generosity this month. From hugs and smiles, to help with chores, allowance money, or special talents like creating a video/artwork/song, or teaching a skill/sport/language/concept. Knowing what we have to give helps us to be ready to do so!



Generosity

Defined as **"readiness or liberality in giving"** ([dictionary.com](https://www.dictionary.com)), generosity is a trait that often comes up as we near the holidays. As individuals, families and classes, we often look for ways to give to others in our social circles and well beyond them. So, are you **ready** to give **liberally**?

If you need more convincing, there are many reasons to boost and encourage this trait in yourself and the children in your lives. Research has consistently linked generosity to increases in happiness. This effect starts with the simple act of agreeing to help and then increases with actually completing that helpful action. More sustained and regular acts of generosity have been shown to have even greater impacts on boosting happiness and other positive emotions, and reducing negative emotions.

Generosity has been linked to better physical health and longer, more prosperous lives. Generosity impacts us at the biological level, in the nervous system, gene expression and in the brain. Researchers (Nelson-Coffey, Fritz, Lyubomirsky, & Cole, 2017) have found that adults engaging in activities that helped specific others reduced the white blood cell stress responses that can lead to inflammatory and cardiovascular diseases. More research is needed before volunteering is prescribed by doctors to treat genetic dispositions for these conditions, but they did find that generosity toward the world at large (instead of specific others) did not yield the same results. So pick a specific charity, person, family, or cause to guide your generosity toward this month.

Similarly, other researchers (Miller, Kohle, Troxel and Hastings, 2020) studied the effects of generosity on the nervous system of



◆ Talk as a family or class about being generous with **presence & presents** this holiday season. Have each member write specific ways they will be present with others this season (play games, read together, volunteer, help neighbors, work on a project together.) Also talk about presents that each can give of some type of resource, such as time, talent, or treasure. Younger children can be directed to share their generosity towards people or animals at home or school, while older kids may have a person, cause or organization or importance in the larger community to focus their generosity toward.

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young children at age 4 and 6. They found that more generous children's nervous systems returned to baseline quicker, suggesting they received a physical sense of soothing after being generous. At a time in childhood when the nervous system is developing rapidly, fostering a system that is flexible and returns to baseline quickly is the foundation of emotional regulation and mental health. Look for opportunities this month for young children to share or donate items they have.

Tuning into brain activity, you will find that the pleasure, social engagement and trust regions of the brain light up when giving to others. Endorphins and oxytocin flood the brain of generous people. Generosity is closely linked with increased empathy, cooperation, and also appears to be contagious. Have you ever gone through a drive thru and your items were purchased by the car ahead of you? If not, consider starting this trend this month.

Look for ways this month to be generous with your time, resources, and support towards specific others. Have each family or class member choose a focus for generosity this month. Tune in to how this practice impacts your mood, energy, mental and physical health.

Marsh, J & Suttie, J. (2010). 5 Ways Giving Is Good For You. The Greater Good Magazine, accessed [here](#).

Miller J.G., Kahle S., Troxel N.R. & Hastings P.D. (2020) The Development of Generosity From 4 to 6 Years: Examining Stability and the Biopsychosocial Contributions of Children's Vagal Flexibility and Mothers' Compassion. Frontiers in Psychology, accessed [here](#).

Nelson-Coffey, Fritz, Lyubomirsky, & Cole, 2017 referenced in The Science of Generosity by The Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley, accessed [here](#).

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Counseling
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(407) 644-4692 ext.104

www.lcsfl.com

schools@lcsfl.com