

3 You're a parent of a child who doesn't know how to share (or just doesn't want to). How might you encourage your child to develop this trait? What learning experiences might you create for him or her?

4 You live in a world where service is always rewarded. If you help someone, you immediately receive thanks, kindness, and money in return. How might this affect you and others?

5 You've been asked to head a national committee to evaluate the welfare system in your country. Currently your country has thousands of second-, third-, and even fourth-generation welfare recipients; some people who receive welfare have children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren who also receive it. As committee chair, you can decide to change the welfare system or leave it the way it is. What will you do and why?

Activities

READ AND DISCUSS THIS POEM by Edwin Markham:

He drew a circle that shut me out—
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.
But Love and I had the wit to win:
We drew a circle that took him in!

What does this poem mean to you and your friends? Can you think of examples from your own life that seem to fit the poem? Is there anyone you know who might benefit from being drawn into your circle?

WRITE IN YOUR JOURNAL² about a time when someone was kind to you or did a service for you. How did you feel? Have you ever received a service that made you feel uncomfortable or embarrassed? Why did you feel that way? What can you learn from that experience?

READ A BIOGRAPHY about a famous philanthropist—someone who has dedicated his or her life to improving the lives of others. Make a poster illustrating the person's achievements. Write a report or make a speech about him or her.

LEARN ABOUT THE WELFARE SYSTEM in your country. Contact your city or state government to find out

how much welfare costs your city or state. Make a line graph showing how welfare costs have increased or decreased over the past 10 years. You might want to make separate graphs showing the costs for children (ages 5–18), adults (19–65), and seniors (66 and over). Find out if the number of people receiving welfare benefits has increased, decreased, or stayed the same.

CHECK IT OUT



To learn more about the welfare system in the United States, contact:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 647–D
Washington, DC 20201
(202) 690-6343
<http://www.dhhs.gov/>

RESEARCH HOW OTHER COUNTRIES have cared for their citizens through history. You might take a look at Egypt, Greece, African nations, China, Russia (or the former Soviet Union), or Canada. Or find out how the United States has cared for Native American peoples. Make a chart comparing the countries or cultures you choose to research.

PLAN AND DO A SERVICE PROJECT. Follow these steps:³

- 1. Research your project.** Choose an issue or need that concerns you, then come up with a project related to that issue or need.
- 2. Form a team.** If you don't want to go it alone, or if the project seems too complicated to do by yourself, invite others to join you.
- 3. Find a sponsor.** Ask a responsible adult (teacher, parent, neighbor, scout leader, etc.) to act as your sponsor. This can give your project credibility with other adults whose help and/or permission you might need.
- 4. Make a plan.** Decide when and where to meet. Decide how you will get to the meeting place and service location. Define your goal; what do you hope to

³ Adapted from *The Kid's Guide to Service Projects* by Barbara A. Lewis (Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 1995), pages 8–12. Used with permission of the publisher.

² See "Endurance," pages 88, 89, and 92, for journaling resources.

achieve? Set a schedule for your project. Estimate your costs. Think hard about your project; is it realistic? Too complicated? Too simple? How could you improve it?

5. Consider the recipient. Always make sure that the people you plan to serve really want your help. What's the best way to do this? Ask them!

6. Decide where you'll perform your service. Will you go to the people you plan to serve, or will they come to you? If you go to them, be sure to visit the location ahead of time and find out if it has what you need. If they come to you, make sure that your location has what you need.

7. Get any permissions you need to proceed. Depending on your project, you might have to ask permission from your principal, teacher(s), school district personnel, youth leader, parents, etc.

8. Advertise. Let other people know about your project. Make a flyer, create a public service announcement, or send out a press release.

9. Fund-raise. Do you need start-up money for your service project? Will you need to buy equipment or supplies? If your project will cost anything beyond pocket money, you'll need to fund-raise.

10. When your project has ended, evaluate it. Reflect on your experience. Discuss it with your team, family, teachers, friends, and neighbors. Talk it over with the people you served. What did you learn? What did you accomplish? Would you do the project again? How could you improve it?

CHECK IT OUT



Four national programs that promote youth service are:

Corporation for National Service

1201 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20525
(202) 606-5000
<http://www.cns.gov/>

National Youth Leadership Council

1910 West County Road B
Roseville, MN 55113
(612) 631-3672
<http://www.nylc.org/>

Youth as Resources

Center for Youth as Resources
1700 K Street, NW, Suite 801
Washington, DC 20006
(202) 466-6272, ext. 131
<http://www.yar.org/>

Youth Service America

1101 15th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 296-2992
<http://www.servenet.org/ysanet2/index.html>

DO A "SECRET SERVICE." Choose someone you'd like to do something nice for or give something to. Leave a treat on a porch, in a locker, on a desk. Write an anonymous note telling the person why you admire him or her.

Variation: Do the "Twelve Days of Christmas Surprise" for someone lonely or in need. Secretly leave a treat or perform a service for the person 12 days in a row. (You don't have to wait until Christmas.)

CHECK IT OUT



For inspiration when planning your "secret service," read:

Kids' Random Acts of Kindness by the editors of Conari Press (Emeryville, CA: Conari Press, 1994). Kids from around the world tell their own stories of sudden, impetuous acts of kindness.

WRITE YOUR OWN "RANDOM ACTS" BOOK. Collect stories from friends, classmates, family members, and neighbors. Illustrate your book with drawings or photographs. Make several copies to hand out.

BRAINSTORM A LIST OF POSSIBLE NEEDS for family members (parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents, etc.). You could also brainstorm lists of needs for teachers, custodians, lunchroom aides, your school, the PTA, seniors, people with special needs, animals, etc. Review your lists and choose a project to do based on a need.

START A KINDNESS "CHAIN REACTION." Place a "Kindness Box" in your school, home, or club. Put a stack of paper and a marker beside the box. Above the box, include a sheet of simple instructions. They might say "Write about an anonymous act of kindness

you've done or seen someone do." Each week, take the papers out of the box and display them in a chain on a wall. Or decorate a bulletin board with care messages or quotations about caring.

WRITE A SKIT about acts of kindness and ways to serve others. Present it to celebrate a favorite holiday or any time during the year. You might perform your skit for children in a hospital or shelter.

MAKE "I CARE" KITS. Collect personal items such as combs, toothbrushes, soaps, deodorants, etc. for a traveler's aid service. Or collect clothing, mittens, and shoes for a homeless shelter. Or collect pens, pencils, crayons, paper, and lap games for children in hospitals. Or make a Newcomer's Kit for new kids who come into your school. (This kit might include a map of the school, a school schedule, information about clubs and activities, a bus schedule, or anything else you can think of.)

COLLECT SONGS ABOUT CARING. Do this with a group of friends—you'll have more fun and find more songs. Perform some of your songs for your school, your community center, or children at a hospital or shelter.


BE A CARING TEAM PLAYER. Brainstorm ways to support team members when they make mistakes, have poor skills, or insult each other. How can you show care and concern for members of your own team, other teams, your coach, and yourself?


PLAY A "LET ME HELP YOU" GAME. Create an obstacle course that isn't too difficult. Pair off into partners. One partner wears a blindfold; the other is the helper. Start by having the blindfolded players try to navigate the obstacle course without help. They may refuse—or they may try and laugh, trip, or fall. Next, have the helpers guide the blindfolded players through the course. Switch places so all players have the chance to experience how good it feels to give and receive help.


Variations:


1. The helper gives verbal instructions but doesn't touch the blindfolded person.
2. The helper says nothing, but guides the blindfolded person with his or her hands.
3. The helper uses a combination of words and touches to guide the blindfolded person.


READ STORIES ABOUT CARING. Look for these books:

 *Dicey's Song* by Cynthia Voigt (New York: Atheneum, 1982). Dicey struggles with school, a job, and responsibility for her brothers and sisters as she adjusts to living with her grandmother. Ages 11–12.

 *The Gift of the Magi* by O. Henry (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996). A husband and wife give up their most valued possessions to purchase Christmas presents for each other. Ages 10 & up. (You can also find this story in many anthologies.)

 *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein (New York: HarperCollins Children's Books, 1964). A tree becomes an important part of a young boy's life. As they both age, the tree keeps giving happiness to the boy until she has none left for herself. All ages.

 *Monkey Island* by Paula Fox (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1993). Clay's father has left, and one day his mother doesn't come home. After a few days, 11-year-old Clay runs away and begins living on the streets, where he finds new friends to help him get by. Ages 11 & up.

 *Sarah Bishop* by Scott O'Dell (New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1991). During the Revolutionary War, Sarah is befriended by an Indian couple and a young Quaker. When Sarah's reclusive lifestyle leads to charges of witchcraft, she is defended by the Quaker. Ages 11–15.