

# We each have something to contribute to the world

**CONTRIBUTE**

[kuh n-trib-yoot] verb  
to give (time, knowledge, assistance, money, etc.) for a common purpose or to make a difference.

Contribution is any act or intention that improves the circumstances of others. The improvement can be physical, emotional, or situational. If the interaction has made the other person feel better, even in a small way, you have contributed to someone else's life. Contributing feels good. When we give, it improves our self-esteem and confidence. When we give our time, talents or money, we learn to appreciate what we have. The same applies for our children.

Individuals who recognize that they have the ability and power to influence their world are more likely to get involved. This sense of purpose can motivate and empower individuals to take actions and make choices that improve the world as well as enhance their own competence, character and sense of connection. Contribution is an important component in building resilience and parents can help their adolescents to develop and strengthen that skill. Here are a few things to think about as you guide your adolescent toward a life of contribution.

- ◆ Take opportunities to point out ways that you and your child can make contributions in the world. By talking about those who may be less fortunate, we aren't trying to help our children feel good or bad about themselves, we can use these opportunities to show our children that they may have the resources (time, talent, money) that can have an impact and make a difference in the lives of those who have fewer resources.
- ◆ It's difficult to be "me" focused when you are doing something for someone else. Adolescent brains tend to be very self-focused. That doesn't mean our children are selfish—it just means, they are wired to focus on their own needs first. We can help them develop a wider focus by developing their desire to contribute. Remember, they are learning from watching us. Are we modeling those things for our children?
- ◆ Each of us has different talents. Identify each child's individual strengths. We are more likely to engage in an activity that we enjoy. Create opportunities for each child to contribute in some specific way that fits with their individual talents and strengths.
- ◆ Help your child see others in his/her community who contribute and might serve as role models. Be creative. Those role models may be in your community, your child's school, or even in your own home.

Our kids are amazing! They are going to make a huge difference in our world. We need to help them to see that they CAN make a difference and then create opportunities for that to happen.

### Prevention Principle

A sense of purpose motivates positive health

### Conversations that Count

Individuals and families who contribute become stronger and more resilient and recognize that they are a valuable part of making the world a better place.

Each family has the power to become a positive influence in their community. Use this month's [PowerTalk](#) activity, [Our Family Can Have a Positive Influence](#), to explore ways that your family can use the unique talents of each individual member to make a difference.

### Tech Tips for Parents: Using technology to make a difference for others

Technology is a very real part of our children's lives. They use technology all day, every day. Since it is such an integral part of all that they do, it makes sense that they would use technology as they learn to contribute to their world and make a difference in their community. Here are just a few ways that you can help your adolescent get started:

- Technology can make our lives easier. Technology can connect us to others in many ways. But for some individuals, technology can be a barrier. Assist or train someone who doesn't have experience with technology (perhaps an older neighbor or family member), to understand the basics of technology like email, search engines, Skype or Facetime, local events, newspapers and social media. Local libraries often have computers available for public use.
- Use your computer, tablet or phone to do a search for ways to volunteer in your community.
- Use YouTube videos to research energy saving strategies for your family and create a plan to implement them.
- Learn a new skill like painting or gardening. Then contribute your newly acquired skill to complete a project for someone who needs your help.

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