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Cynthia Strauss, Director of Research

# “How can I instill charitable values in my children?”

By Cynthia Strauss

**Charitable giving has traditionally been viewed as an activity for grown-ups.** In most cases, parents who wished to engage their children in their family's giving would wait until at least the teenage years to do so. But a growing body of commentary points to the significant advantages of parents including kids in their personal philanthropy at an earlier age. Indeed, as with so many other things, when it comes to instilling in children a charitable instinct—a real sense of the need that exists, and of the importance of giving to others—the earlier the better.

Here are several suggestions for getting your children (or grandchildren) involved, with the ultimate aim of passing down to them a true sense of charity, and helping them become part of a continuing legacy of giving.

**Build perspective from the beginning.** It is never too early to talk about your charitable passions with your children, including favorite causes and what you do to support them. Enthusiasm is contagious, and you will likely soon find them following up, asking questions and offering help. When it comes to hands-on giving, a younger child outgrowing her toys is a perfect first opportunity to teach the importance (and fun) of charity. Help your child choose which toys, books or clothes to give away, talk to her about

where they are going, and, if possible, take her with you to donate them.

**Teach financial values.** Ellen Remmer of The Philanthropic Initiative, in a paper entitled “Raising Children with Philanthropic Values,” touts the value of the three-part allowance, with equal amounts set aside each week for spending, saving and giving. According to Remmer, “This will reinforce the importance of saving and giving and also will provide early practice in money management. Once or twice a year, talk with your child about giving and help identify possible recipients.”

**Engage children in philanthropic decisions.** As children become a bit older, they will have their own interests. Encourage yours to adopt their own causes, and begin to involve them in your charitable decision making.

**Make volunteering a family activity.** As Susan Price writes in her book *The Giving Family*, “Volunteering is one of the best ways to build a child's character and self-esteem...they acquire new skills, develop confidence and maturity, put their own problems in perspective, meet people from other backgrounds, and learn teamwork and civic responsibility. For families, volunteering is a good way to spend quality time together, to share experiences, establish traditions, and have fun, all while helping the community.”

**Take advantage of teachable moments.** All of us have moments in life when a loved one, be it family member or friend, is struck with a need due to illness or other circumstance. These events can be powerful opportunities for building empathy and emphasizing the importance of helping others.

**Create a dedicated account for giving.** Creating a separate account for charitable giving in your family's name is a good way to encourage your kids to participate in your giving and to increase their sense of ownership in the family's philanthropy. Donor-advised funds, like those available through Fidelity Charitable and other charitable organizations, offer maximum flexibility for giving over a period of years, and can be passed down to your heirs.

**Practice giving year-round.** Involve your children in these pursuits year-round, not just around the holidays.

Not every child will become a great philanthropist. But involving children in your family's charitable activities is an ideal way to pass on your deeply held personal values and to instill in your children the importance of giving to others while, along the way, helping them to learn key lessons about financial management and responsibility. 🌱

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**“When it comes to instilling in children a charitable instinct...the earlier the better.”**

– Cynthia Strauss

### How to reach Cynthia Strauss

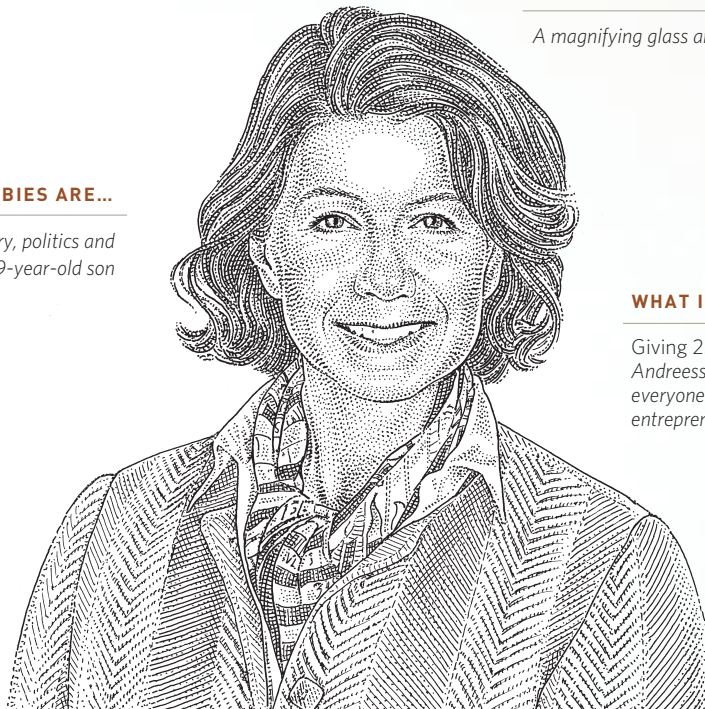
*I look forward to discussing how to maximize your charitable gift. I can be reached at 800.280.6357.*

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## About Cynthia Strauss

Cynthia Strauss is director of research and a member of the Senior Management Team of Fidelity Charitable, a public charity with a donor-advised fund program. Ms. Strauss is responsible for building relations within the philanthropic sector. She is also a grant maker on behalf of the board of trustees of Fidelity Charitable. Previously, Ms. Strauss managed teams at Fidelity Management and Research Company, where she served in numerous capacities. She worked as a director of research for Fidelity's actively managed U.S. equity funds, investment-grade bond funds and domestic and Canadian dollar money market funds, and was also a senior fixed income analyst. She holds a BA degree cum laude from Wesleyan University.

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