

Expanding Your Impact

Serving with Your Family

The idea: Service doesn't only happen with a club or at school, some of the best of it happens at home, with your family. Serving together helps people who need it and pulls a family closer at the same time. And often, the person who gets a family started is a kid who simply suggests it.

"Charity begins at home, but should not end there." — Thomas Fuller

"Family is not an important thing. It's everything." — Michael J. Fox

"Work is love made visible." — Kahlil Gibran

FACILITATOR NOTES

Time. about 60–90 minutes total. Works in a classroom, youth group, or club. No materials or cost required.

Service today. Pick one option in Serve below and set it up before you begin.

Warm-up (10 minutes)

FACILITATOR NOTES

Keep this quick, short answers are great. Read the questions together.

- Does your family do anything together to help others? If so, what? If not, what could you imagine?
- Why might serving as a family feel different from serving with friends or a club?
- What's something even a young child in a family could do to help?
- How do you think families change when they do hard or meaningful things together?

Learn (10–20 minutes)

When people think about volunteering, they usually picture a school club or a youth group. But the family is one of the most natural places to serve, and one of the most powerful. Serving together does double duty. Raking a neighbor's yard, packing food boxes, visiting a care home, doing something kind for someone who's struggling: it helps people who need it. And it knits your family closer in the process. There's something about working side by side toward something good that brings out the best in people who live together. Family service also has a sneaky advantage: it includes everyone. Grandparents, parents, teenagers, and little kids can all find a job, which means nobody's too young or too old to help. And here's the part that matters for you: families often start serving because one person, frequently a young one, simply says, "Hey, what if we did this together?"

Serving as a family is powerful because it:

- Helps others and strengthens your family at the same time.
- Includes every age: everyone from grandparents to little kids can find a job.
- Can grow into a tradition, something your family is known for and proud of.

A closer look. One Thanksgiving, a kid suggests the family spend the morning serving meals at a shelter before their own dinner. It's a little awkward at first, nobody quite knows the routine, and the youngest is shy. But something happens over those few hours: Dad's joking with strangers, the little one is proudly refilling water cups, and on the drive home the car is quieter and warmer than usual. They've helped a roomful of people who needed it, and somehow they feel more like a team than they have in months. The next year, nobody has to suggest it. It's just what the family does now.

Why serving together matters. Plenty of families spend their time together in front of screens or running between activities, side by side but not really together. Serving breaks that pattern. It gives a family a shared purpose, a reason to work as a team, and a stack of memories that beat another night of TV. It also passes something down quietly: when kids grow up serving alongside their parents, helping others stops being a special event and becomes just part of who the family is, and who they become. And it's some of the most natural service there is, no committee, no sign-up, just the people you already live with deciding to do some good together. A family that serves tends to raise people who serve.

How to get your family serving. You don't have to wait for a parent to suggest it, you can be the spark. To get your family serving, you can:

- Make the suggestion: propose one simple thing your family could do together to help.
- Pick something for all ages: choose an activity even the youngest can join in.
- Make it easy to say yes: keep the first one short, simple, and close to home.
- Turn it into a habit: if it goes well, suggest doing it regularly, monthly, or on holidays.

Keep these in mind.

- **You can start it.** Families often serve because one person suggested it. That person can be you.
- **Everyone gets a job.** Match the task to the age. A four-year-old handing out napkins is still serving.
- **Keep the first one easy.** Short and simple beats ambitious and never-happens. You can grow it later.
- **Let it become a tradition.** The real power comes when family service stops being an event and becomes just what you do.

Serve (30–60 minutes)

Today you'll put this into practice in a real service activity. Here are ways to do it:

Option A — Suggest one family service act *(no cost, works in any setting)*

Be the spark: propose one simple, free thing your family can do together to help someone, rake an elderly neighbor's leaves, bake something for a family having a hard week, write cards for people who are lonely, clean up a local spot. Pick something everyone can join, then help make it happen. Getting your family to serve together even once, because you suggested it, is a real and quietly powerful thing.

Option B — Take on a family project *(low cost, a bit more effort)*

Plan a bigger service project the whole family does together: assemble care kits at the kitchen table, sign up as a family for a community cleanup or food-bank shift, or adopt a neighbor who needs regular help. Give everyone a role, including the youngest, and do it as a team. A project you tackle together gets real help done and gives your family something to be proud of.

Option C — Start a family service tradition *(more effort; ongoing)*

Turn family service into a regular thing, not a one-time event. Pick a rhythm that fits, a monthly service afternoon, a holiday tradition of helping others, an ongoing commitment to one neighbor or cause, and keep it going. Traditions are what make service part of a family's identity. Years from now, it might be the thing your family is proudest of, and the reason serving feels natural to you for life.

Before you go (all options): Plan family service with a parent or guardian leading, and keep activities safe and age-appropriate for everyone taking part, especially young children. Serve in public or supervised settings, follow any organization's rules, and make sure younger kids are always watched.

Reflect (10 minutes)

FACILITATOR NOTES

After serving, talk through a few of these together, then give everyone quiet time to write.

What did your family do, and how did it feel to serve together?

Did anyone surprise you, like a younger sibling who really got into it?

How was serving with family different from serving with friends or a group?

Would your family do it again? Could it become a tradition?

Then finish one or both sentences:

One thing I'll suggest my family do together to help others is...

A service tradition I'd love my family to start is...
