

8 small ways to help others this festive season

With the festive season around the corner, we're all aware that many around us are in great need and may not be able to enjoy themselves during the holidays. If you want to help, but don't have the budget to do so, here are meaningful and inexpensive ways to give back to the needy during this season.



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1. Donate goods and give toys

Clean out your cupboards to find clothing, toys, and household items that you no longer need and donate them to local shelters and charities. If your budget allows, take a gift of new toys to the children's wing at a government hospital, and give joy to a sick child who is unable to be at home for the holidays. Good ideas for kids who are confined to a ward include board games, arts and crafts kits, colouring books and pencils, soft toys, headphones, and toy kits like Lego. You could even, with staff's permission, take balloons to brighten up a children's ward.

"Helping others strengthens our sense of meaning and purpose. Studies have shown that being a kind and generous person gives us a sense of satisfaction and belonging, helping us to feel more connected to our community," says Dalit Shekel, key accounts manager at Relate Bracelets, a not-for-profit social enterprise passionate about supporting credible causes and raising funds for social upliftment initiatives.

"We are all connected, and each of us has the opportunity, responsibility and privilege to make the world around us a better place. Embracing a more selfless mindset and looking for ways in which you can make a positive difference, big or small, leads to a more fulfilling life," she adds.

2. Buy an extra can of dog food

It's a sad fact that this time of the year sees animal shelters overrun with cats and dogs that have been abandoned. Help animals waiting for their forever homes by dropping off a bag of food at your local shelter. Many shelters will also welcome old blankets, towels and sheets, or second-hand pet beds, leads, collars, cages, bowls, and pet carriers. Shelters often

raise funds at shopping malls by having gift-wrapping stations manned by volunteers. Save yourself the hassle of wrapping gifts and do good in the process with a donation to their worthy cause!



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3. Invite someone who is alone to join your holiday celebrations

Good quality social connections are crucial to human happiness and well-being, but in our fast-paced world, people are increasingly feeling isolated and alone. People without enough strong social connections are at higher risk of stroke, anxiety, dementia, depression, suicide and more. In fact, the problem is so severe that the World Health Organisation is making loneliness a global health priority.

“Holidays can be a difficult time for people who live alone, or whose family are far away. If you suspect a neighbour, colleague or friend may be lonely or in need, see if you can help in any way over the festive season. A small act of kindness can go a long way and may just be the lifeline they need if they are feeling empty or alone. Or consider inviting them over for a festive lunch and giving them an opportunity to make wonderful memories. Even dropping off a home-made meal or foodie treat can bring someone else great cheer,” advises Shekel.

4. Create care packages

You can send care packages to organisations desperately in need of resources. For example, The Nelson Mandela School Library Project aims to change the face of literacy in schools across South Africa. Through the deployment of refurbished shipping containers converted into libraries, they benefit more than 80,000 children daily. You can send them books you no longer need to help them build libraries.

“Before donating items or care packages, it’s a good idea to contact local charities or organisations to inquire about their specific needs and how you can best support their efforts during the holiday season,” advises Shekel.

5. Bake and share

If you enjoy baking, make cookies, cakes, or other delicious treats - share the joy of the season with others. Staff working festive season shifts at institutions like local police stations, medical clinics, shelters, and old age homes will love getting a plate of goodies.



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6. Host a fundraising event

Organise a simple and low-cost fundraising event to collect money for a chosen charity. This could be a small neighbourhood gathering, a garage sale, or a potluck dinner where attendees contribute a donation. Pooling resources with friends, family, or neighbours can amplify the impact of your collective contribution.

7. Buy to help others

This year, consider buying gifts that benefit a worthy cause, such as Relate Bracelets. They are made by seniors, refugees

and township youth, which gives them a way to earn money, and income made from their sale goes to credible charities and social upliftment initiatives, ranging from feeding human and animal orphans and educating children, to looking after the frail and elderly and bringing clean water to villages.

“The act of purchasing a set of Relate bracelets goes beyond just looking stylish, it signifies a commitment to helping those in need,” adds Shekel.

8. Volunteer your time

Give the gift of your time by volunteering at local charities, shelters, or community events, who may need extra hands during the holiday season. Whether it's serving meals at a soup kitchen, wrapping gifts for a charity drive, or assisting at a local event, your time can make a significant impact.

“By volunteering your time, you can help charities expedite their programmes and help those in need quicker,” says Shekel. “The spirit of giving doesn't always have to involve money; your time, effort, and thoughtfulness can make a significant difference in the lives of others.”

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