

Advent

Make an Acts of Kindness Tree

Whereas the liturgical season of Advent is focused on quiet reflection and waiting, the wider culture is focused on buying and consuming. How can parents take the lead in helping their families focus on values of kindness, service, and giving during such a busy time of year? Make an “acts of kindness tree” that helps to bring focus to the season.

Designed for Ages 5+

Materials

1. Acts of kindness ornaments (visit www.traci-smith.com/resources for a link to printable ornaments, or make your own using the suggestions in the “how to” section)
2. Small Christmas tree or branch that will be dedicated to this purpose

Time Investment: Varies

How To

1. Make 25 acts of kindness ornaments for your advent tree. Visit www.traci-smith.com/resources for a link to a printable template you can buy, or make your own ornaments. To make your own, cut out 25 shapes (stars, bells, candy canes, etc.) and write the 25 following instructions on them (one per ornament).

- 1. Give someone a compliment.*
- 2. Feed the birds.*
- 3. Write someone a thank-you note.*
- 4. Leave an encouraging note around the house for someone to see.*

Advent: Make an Acts of Kindness Tree

- 5. Pick up trash around your house or school.*
- 6. Do a chore for someone (set the table, sweep the floor, or take out the trash).*
- 7. Tell someone in your family why he or she is important to you.*
- 8. Send a card to someone who needs extra love.*
- 9. Donate food to the food pantry.*
- 10. Make a homemade gift for someone.*
- 11. Smile at everyone you see today.*
- 12. Do something kind for a neighbor (bring their garbage cans up to their house, shovel or sweep their driveway, bring over a treat or gift).*
- 13. Pass on a book or toy to a friend.*
- 14. Hold the door open for someone.*
- 15. Leave some pennies (heads up) on the sidewalk to wish someone a happy day.*
- 16. Think of five things you are grateful for and share them with your family.*
- 17. Let someone go ahead of you in line.*
- 18. Bring flowers or cookies to a nursing home or hospital.*
- 19. Tell your postal worker that he or she is doing a good job.*
- 20. Tidy up your room (or a common area) without being asked.*
- 21. Pray for a country that is far away from your country.*
- 22. Take a photo of something beautiful and share it with someone in your family.*
- 23. Draw a picture or write a poem for someone else.*
- 24. Find little ways to help the planet, such as turning off unnecessary lights or using less water.*
- 25. Spend time with family or friends instead of watching TV or other electronics.*

2. Once the ornaments are made, place them on a tree or branch.
3. Take an ornament off the tree each day and do the act of kindness it suggests.
4. Repeat step 3 each day.

Notes

- The ornaments can be numbered prior to placement on the tree. If this is done, consider looking at the calendar and placing more challenging activities on the days that are less occupied for your family, and easier activities on busy days.
- There is a danger in this activity becoming “just one more thing” to do during Advent. I advise a spirit of flexibility and grace for this activity. If your family isn’t able to complete an activity one day, no worries. Pick it up the next day, after Christmas, or simply let it go.

Variations

- Put ornaments in a basket or box instead of on a tree.
- Do activities at random (or on selected days only) rather than one per day.
- Do this activity at a different time of year, instead of only Advent.