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# Section One

## Formulating your inspirations, values, and family philanthropic mission



# Philanthropic Inspiration



*“The greatest use of life is to spend it for something that will outlast it.”*

- William James

## Discovering Your Inspiration

Although each of us may have different inspirations for becoming philanthropic, every philanthropist has one thing in common: desire. Our internal motivations, such as religion or moral obligations, often motivate us to help others. In addition, external pressure from those soliciting our help can be even more important. According to research from London South Bank University, “we give first and foremost not to the cause but to the person who asks us to give.”

From the simplest perspective, philanthropic inspiration is derived from altruism and egoism. Each person’s motivation lies somewhere on the spectrum between the two. Those individuals who are inspired by altruism receive pleasure from helping others. They are not looking for any personal benefit from their behavior. Those individuals who are inspired by egoism are focused on helping others for their own benefit. Just as each of us has our own place on this spectrum, we each have a different story regarding our inspiration.



### Ask Yourself

How do you rank on the egotistical to altruistic spectrum?  
Are you a ten (altruistic) a one (egocentric) or somewhere in-between?

Most people generally rank themselves around a four to six: feeling balanced between ultra-egotistical and extremely altruistic.

A good place to start your family’s journey into philanthropy is to reflect upon what inspires you.

### Ask yourself the following questions in order to better understand your inspiration.

- Did you grow up in a family where helping others was valued? If you did, what memories do you have?
- How did your parents demonstrate and teach kindness and compassion to others?
- Have you experienced a life event that motivates you to support a certain charitable cause?
- Did someone in your life give you the initial inspiration to help others? If so, who inspired you?
- Do you feel a spiritual commitment to encourage others?

Let’s look at the differing motivations of the wealthiest man in the world at the turn of the twentieth century and the wealthiest man in the world today.

### Andrew Carnegie

Andrew Carnegie derived his wealth from the steel industry. In his article, “The Gospel of Wealth,” he describes the responsibility of philanthropy by the wealthy elite. He believed that the rich should administer their wealth during their lifetime for the betterment of society rather than engage in self-indulgence and irresponsible spending. Mr. Carnegie felt it was



a duty for the rich to live modest lifestyles. He believed keeping such tremendous wealth in the family would tempt his children to live less impactful lives. For Carnegie, he derived personal satisfaction by seeing his wealth build hospitals, libraries, arts centers, and establish universities. On the egotism to altruistic spectrum of philanthropic inspiration, one can agree that Mr. Carnegie was altruistic.

### **William Gates III**

Bill Gates was the wealthiest man at the turn of the new millennium. He credits his philanthropic motivation to his late mother, Mary. In 1986, Microsoft became a public company, which made Mr. Gates a billionaire. After he became wealthy, his mother urged him to give some of his money to others. He reportedly told her that, “I’m just trying to run my company,” and did not want to be distracted from his work. Mary convinced him to start a program at Microsoft that would help raise money for the United Way. Today, Mr. Gates often speaks about a letter from Mary that was written to his then fiancée, Melinda. At Melinda’s wedding shower, Mary, who was fighting cancer at the time, read the letter. “From those to whom much is given, much is expected” was the message. Just six months later, Mary died from breast cancer. Her message to Bill was the spark that created the first Gates charity, the William H. Gates III Foundation. On the egotism to altruistic spectrum, Mr. Gates was originally egotistically focused and later became altruistic.

**Although each of us will have our own philanthropic inspiration, the most common center around eight categories:**

- Family traditions
- Influential people
- Sharing specialized skills
- Life experiences
- Religious beliefs
- Financial matters
- Social status
- National sentiment



### **Ask Yourself**

Which categories best represent your inspiration?

### **Traditions**

Traditions were established by prior familial generations, which then influenced future generations. By maintaining family traditions, such as sponsoring a meal during the holidays or contributing to a school scholarship fund, a family can continue their legacy of helping others. If your family doesn’t have a yearly tradition, consider starting one.

### **Influential People**

Influential people from our past can motivate and encourage us to develop into someone who focuses on helping others. For instance, that old high school coach may have taught you about a strong work ethic,

good sportsmanship, and teamwork. You're then inspired to go on to coach soccer for the local boys and girls club. Perhaps your local church had a minister that stressed the virtues of helping others. You then decide you want to volunteer for your church as a mentor to help children learn about God.

When you help someone else, your own satisfaction and self-worth improve. Instead of being alone with your talents, you can share them with someone who can learn and benefit from the experience. An example would be a retired carpenter donating time to build a house for Habitat for Humanity. The carpenter can connect with others while enjoying the company of like-minded civic citizens.



### **Ask Yourself**

Who has encouraged your philanthropic inspiration?

### **Specialized Skills**

Sharing specialized skills and business acumen to help non-profits navigate the business of philanthropy can motivate an individual to become active in philanthropy. Most non-profit causes and organizations rely on the knowledge of volunteers to run their organizations. Often, people help organizations where their special skills and experiences best match the needs of the charity. Just like the carpenter working at Habitat for Humanity, an accountant might help a non-profit organization balance its books. A successful chef could teach a food-based charity how to prepare, cook, and distribute high-quality meals to large groups of people.



### **Life Experience**

A life experience can lead some people to become philanthropic. Perhaps a tragedy occurs—a family member has died in an accident, for instance. Many parents then feel compelled to right that wrong by working for social reform in honor of their loved one. Future generations benefit from their loss and it helps the family process their grief. Mothers Against Drunk Driving was founded in 1980 by a mother whose daughter was killed by a drunk driver. Eighty-five years later, MADD is successfully working to end drunk driving while supporting the victims affected by drunk or drugged drivers.



### **Ask Yourself**

Has a Life Experience influenced your philanthropic outlook?

### **Religious Beliefs**

Religious beliefs can lead to a moral decision to help others. Religious doctrines encourage and require helping others through actions or giving. In fact, there are biblical references, which discuss how those people of wealth should use their riches for the benefit of mankind. People who are faithful to their religious traditions can voluntarily bestow a percentage of their income to the church and the church's work

in the community. Through church, many people are involved in charitable acts toward their neighbors. Often their donating is combined with volunteer hours that make a positive difference in the community.

### Financial Reasons

Financial reasons can often motivate philanthropic. Maybe you're in a high tax just be wishful thinking!) and donate in order to get a tax or a potential tax may acquire a large sum of money through inheritance. They may then desire to use acquired money to help others charitably. owner who just celebrated his seventieth car repair business for ten million dollars. charitably inclined in the past, he believes can make an impact on his community his taxes. He elects to start his own private foundation with a focus on educating students to learn the trade. As a result of his private foundation, he will reduce his taxable estate, receive tax deductions, and make a positive change in his community.



people to become bracket (hey, it might not money to an organization reduction. Some people the sale of a business or an their large sum of newly For instance, a business birthday sells his foreign Although he has been this large sum of money while potentially reducing

### Social Status

Attaining a level of social status or recognition are reasons why some philanthropic. Let's be honest, this inspired. Although as parent, this really want our children to have this number of philanthropists like the from charity. For instance, your published by the charity, you may the charities' newsletter, your various magazines, and you might local or national TV network. As a donors may find themselves viewed the local community. This higher status could lead to a perception of being a very important person in the community or for a particular charitable cause.



achieving public people become isn't the best reason to be could be a goal, would we motive? However, a notoriety that results picture and name may be be a featured donor in picture may appear in even be interviewed by a result of helping others, at a higher status level in

Social structures such as those between family, friends, and co-workers can also be inspiring. An individual will often derive personal satisfaction through reinvesting in a personal relationship through giving. For instance, a co-worker is running a 10K to benefit disadvantaged children. Since you are part of a company structure and enjoy the personal connection with your company and co-workers, you are inspired to help with the 10K race.



#### Ask Yourself

Have you ever been motivated by social status?

Are financial reasons influencing your giving?



## National Sentiment

Often the nation is presented with a problem or social condition that brings sympathetic citizens together to work for reform. This national sentiment or social movement can be the catalyst for families to give their time, money, and talents to help a cause. Public awareness moves people to participate in their own communities, and communities across the nation can combine for greater results toward a specific issue.

War is often a national situation that calls citizens to action. With soldiers returning, many are honored by citizen action groups. Examples are organizations such as Homes for our Troops that build mortgage-free homes, which are for severely injured Veterans Post-9/11, to enable them to rebuild their lives. The mission of the Quilts of Valor Foundation is to cover service members and veterans touched by war, with comforting and healing Quilts of Valor sewn and donated by citizens.

## Your inspiration

When you understand your own motivations, it is easy to teach your children that giving, helping, and nurturing others are valuable life skills that greatly benefit people. Through volunteering, donating a portion of given or earned income, or a combination of both, children can become philanthropists.

Some parents may believe their children are too self-absorbed. Is this you? Be honest. You may want your children to focus more on other people and less on themselves; perhaps that's why you're reading this book. Don't worry; it's normal for children to focus on themselves! It's in their nature. Our job as parents is to help turn this focus outwards. Or perhaps you simply have children who are determined to help others but need to refine and expand this focus. Regardless, almost every child can enhance their ability to assist others.



Once you determine your inspiration to help people, your family can then start your philanthropic assessment to determine specifically how you and your family want to help others. If your family has limited financial resources, you may center your focus on volunteering and to a lesser extent making charitable donations. Should your family have extensive financial resources, your philanthropic focus might be concentrated initially on teaching your children the importance of the family charitable donations and how these donations will benefit those in need. To be the most impactful though, you and your children should also volunteer your time and talent to helping others, wouldn't you agree?

Regardless of your reason to assist people, it is critical to teach your child the practice of helping others. By helping those in need, your family turns the focus outside the family and into the community. The world becomes a smaller place, a place we are all a part of, no matter our circumstances. And of course, your child can see the direct benefits of their help—go down to the soup kitchen and serve meals; talk to some of the needy families there; see how you can relate to each other. Helping others not only strengthens the family values, it actually provides a tangible way for your children to relate to those who they might not encounter in their day-to-day lives and see how their support is changing the lives of others. Everyone benefits with philanthropy, the helper and the recipient, and giving collectively as a family is key.

**Fortunately, by working together as a family, members will also derive some benefits, such as:**

- Creating a legacy that can continue through multiple generations



- Solidifying values and traditions
- Developing new skills other areas of life



and continuing existing family that can be transferable to

- Feeling needed, impactful, and important to people in your community
- Refining skills such as leadership, teamwork, management, and social manners
- Unifying the family bond by working collaboratively to benefit others
- Meeting and enjoying the company of interesting (different than your immediate circle) people who in turn introduce you to other people and ideas (the ever-expanding circle)

Now that we better understand philanthropic inspiration, let's work on your Inspiration Statement as a way to focus on your particular philanthropic style. At the end of the chapter, use the Call to Action Activity Worksheets as guides to fill in with your own answer.



### Ask Yourself

- What is your philanthropic inspiration?
- How will you share this with your children?
- To what degree are your children inspired to help others?

## Call to Action Philanthropic Inspiration

My Family Inspiration Worksheet	
What inspires your family to be philanthropic to others?	
Today's Date	
What person, if any, serves as your Philanthropic Inspiration?	
Describe one of his/her actions.	
How did that inspire you?	



Did this inspiration cause you to change your actions?	
How did your actions change?	

<b>Teaching Children</b>	
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Do you inspire your child?	
What do you do to inspire them?	
Is your child involved in your philanthropic activities?	
How can your child become more involved?	
What philanthropic activities does your family do together?	
Will you try to change your child's involvement for future activities?	
What did your child learn?	

<b>Further Actions</b>	
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What opportunities will you encourage or create for your child to demonstrate altruistic behavior?	

Reflecting on your childhood family, were there activities you could teach your child based on your family's past?	
What is your philanthropic goal for your family?	
By the end of this book, what would you like your child to understand about philanthropy?	

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