

## Embracing Imperfection This Holiday Season by Ruth Gilbert

Things can get a little hectic this time of year, especially if there are children in your life. Whether it's from social media or just from ourselves, there's so much pressure on parents to do all the things that are supposed to make the holidays perfect: go on all the holiday outings, do all the crafts, bake all the cookies, find special gifts. This year, I've decided to not merely tolerate imperfection; I'm going to embrace it. That means serving up baked goods I've made without complaining that they're overbaked or ugly. That means watching "The Nutcracker Ballet" on YouTube with my daughters because we didn't make it to a live show. And that means cuddling up and reading a book together without worrying about the Magnatiles covering every square inch of the floor.

This year, let's be as generous to ourselves as we are to our loved ones. If you're also hoping to slow down and think about what really makes the holidays special, here are some of my favorite books about generosity to share with your children. You'll forget all about your pie with the soggy bottom when you're snuggled up with some good stories.

"Our Little Kitchen" by Jillian Tamaki is a lively and joyous picture book about neighbors coming together to make a weekly meal for the community. The illustrations feel a bit like those in a comic book, with text bubbles and lots of action and sound effects. Your family may be inspired to cook a meal for a neighbor or bring a load of groceries to the Country Pantry.

"Thank You, Omu!" by Oge Mora is another picture book about being generous with food, but in this one a grandmotherly woman named Omu has to decide whether to share a delicious red stew that she made for herself. Her neighbors smell the yummy stew cooking in the big fat pot and come knocking - first a little boy, then a police officer, and then a hot dog vendor. Each time someone comes to her door, Omu shares some stew. By the end the stew is gone, but her neighbors knock on the door one last time with a big surprise to show their gratitude, and they share a feast together.

"Extra Yarn" by Mac Barnett and Jon Klassen tells the story of a little girl named Annabelle who finds a box with an endless supply of colorful yarn. She uses it to knit a sweater for herself and for her dog, and when there's still extra yarn, she makes sweaters for everyone in town, including the wild animals, mailboxes, and birdhouses. One day a greedy and fashion-conscious archduke demands that Annabelle sell him her box of yarn. When she refuses, he steals it in the middle of the night only to find it empty. A great story about the spirit of giving.

"Madeline Finn and the Shelter Dog," by Lisa Papp, shows how children can volunteer their time for causes they care about. Madeline visits an animal shelter for the first time and wonders if the animals there sleep under blankets and have stories read to them like her own puppy does. The next time she visits, she brings towels to donate, and decides to organize an event where other children can bring towels and books to read to the animals.

"Rosie and the Pre-loved Dress," by Leanne Hatch is an ode to the perfect dress found by Rosie at a thrift store. The dress makes her feel that she can do anything, and she wears it every day until she outgrows it. After trying to repurpose it as a curtain, modern art, and a dress for a stuffed giraffe, she decides that it is "someone else's turn to love the dress just as much as she did." So back to the thrift store it went as a donation for another person to find.

I hope you find some time to sit down with a book with your little ones this holiday season. That's a gift no one else can give them.