

Practice Showing Gratitude

Gratitude is the act of showing appreciation and being thankful.

Research has shown how daily exercises of practicing gratitude can do wonders for physical, mental, and emotional well-being in children and adults.

Carving out a couple of minutes each day for these exercises builds a habit of gratitude, which leads to both immediate and long-lasting benefits.

Health and wellness benefits include improved sleep quality and a stronger immune system, decreased unexplained aches and pains, increased self-esteem, and more positive social behaviors. Practicing gratitude helps enable children to build high-quality relationships, nurture a sense of purpose, and promote better decision making.

When we engage with our kids in these exercises and train ourselves in the habit of practicing gratitude, it strengthens familial relationships and promotes a sense of love and security that helps our children take on anxious and sad thoughts more effectively. This practice will help our kids build the resiliency they need to get through stressful and tough times.

What exactly can we do? Here are some examples of practicing gratitude:

- Focusing on the positive parts of each day and taking a few minutes to talk about at least one thing, big or small, that you are thankful for as a family
- Write down one thing each family member is thankful for daily at any time and collect them in a family “gratitude jar” that can then be shared at a later designated time (family dinner or on the weekend)
- Older children may benefit from writing down what they are thankful for on a sticky note and placing them on a mirror, or journaling what they are grateful for each day
- Create a theme of the day to encourage our children to think of different ideas of things to be grateful for (people, places, things)
- Include building habits of gratitude into other areas of family wellness such as pointing out things we appreciate or are grateful for on family outings or walks
- Telling a person directly the things about them that we are grateful for

As parents and caregivers, one of our most important tasks is engaging our children, guiding them as they develop, and serving as role models. Building habits of gratitude and practicing gratitude ourselves can support children as they navigate, survive, and thrive in this world. It starts with a couple minutes a day but can lead to a lifetime of benefits.



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