

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL CONNECTIONS

NOVEMBER
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AN RCS PREK EARLY CHILDHOOD FAMILY NEWSLETTER FROM
YOUR SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST AND SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER

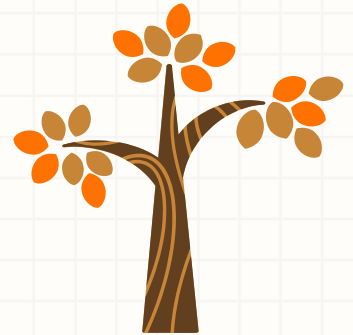
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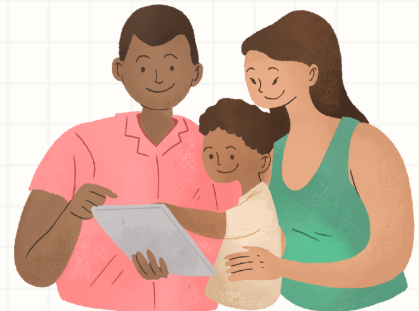
GROWING GRATITUDE IN OUR CHILDREN

Gratitude is a gift we can give our children, with long-term returns on our investment in their emotional well-being. Although research is limited on the positive effects of gratitude in young children, recent research for adults who engage in regular practices of gratitude have found measurable psychological, physical, and interpersonal benefits, including the following positive outcomes:

1. Feel better about their lives overall
2. Experience higher levels of positive emotions, such as optimism, love, happiness
3. Experience enhanced mood which improves insomnia, depression, anxiety, and burn-out
4. Are kinder, helpful, and more generous to others
5. Have fewer physical problems, including less pain
6. Reduce cardiac diseases, inflammations, and neurodegeneration
7. Exercise more regularly and eat healthier
8. Sleep better by improving the sleep-wake cycle
9. Increase caring and attentive behavior to their partners and other relationships
10. Cope with stress more effectively, recover more quickly from stressful situations



"Piglet noticed that even though he had a Very Small Heart, it could hold a rather large amount of Gratitude."
A.A.Milne



SMALL STEPS START WITH OURSELVES

Research suggests that grateful parents tend to raise grateful children. The first step is modeling for your child the gratitude you wish to encourage, such as showing appreciation to others including your child. It can be helpful to be specific in saying why you are grateful.

In addition, placing yourself and your child in activities that provide opportunities for gratitude, such as family gratitude practices and social service events, may help. Both our intentions and actions are important for how gratitude develops in children. Gratitude is a skill we can nurture and develop in our children - and we can help them practice it.





HELPING CHILDREN CULTIVATE GRATITUDE

Help children understand feelings and thoughts - their own & others

We're learning from research that the more a five-year-old understands gratitude, the more they understood emotions and others' perspectives when they were 3 years old. Preschoolers are still learning to identify their own emotions and understand that others' emotions are separate and maybe different from their own. We can help label emotions for children and also provide learning opportunities when we ask children questions such as "How do you think that person feels right now?" or "How would you feel if that was you?"

Encourage Pretend Play

To help children express their own feelings and understand others, encourage pretend play and role-taking. Taking others' perspectives can help children learn empathy and help them appreciate others.

Make gratitude a daily habit

Use everyday teachable moments to show gratitude during conversation or special times of day, such as saying grace for dinner or sharing nightly gratitude prayers.

Read books about gratitude

Read books about expressing thanks to help support a gratitude practice. Books can help provide characters and experiences outside of our own daily living.

Engage in creative art activities

While older children can create gratitude journals, preschoolers can draw with markers or crayons using joyful colors or about things that make them happy and can be enjoyable shared experiences with other family members.



Resources for this newsletter, plus more ideas for daily practices:

<https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/>

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_to_help_gratitude_grow_in_your_kids

<https://positivepsychology.com/gratitude-tree-kids/>

Gratitude meditation with Deepak Chopra: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sia2sJTWsOM



To make your own gratitude boat from a cereal box, like the one above:

https://www.parents.com/fun/arts-crafts/kid/gratitude_boat/

Monthly calendars can help adults establish gratitude practices
(From: greatergood.berkeley.edu).