

15 Ways to Teach Gratitude



Gratitude is a skill. An attitude of gratitude is a positive way of looking at life. It can increase our children's happiness, teach them to be more empathetic and help them to be more thankful for everything they have.

So how do we teach children such an abstract skill? You can get started by implementing this list of ideas today.

1. Say please and thank you. Our manners show that we do not believe we are entitled to anything, and that in fact, we appreciate whatever comes our way.

2. Help someone less fortunate. This could be your neighbor down the street, a family member, or a friend who is in a tough spot. Or consider giving to a nonprofit – they are always looking for basic necessities, meals, and gifts for those in need.

3. Volunteer. Practice giving back by helping out at a homeless shelter, soup kitchen or nonprofit.

4. Send out thank you cards. Make it a habit to express your gratitude for gifts big and small and to those who have added value to your life.

5. Look for awe-inspiring moments in your day. If the sunset is particularly beautiful, comment on it. If the sound of a baby's laughter warms your heart, tell your children. Encourage them to look for their awe-inspiring moments and share them with you.

6. Share your gratitude at bedtime. Take five minutes at the end of the day to ask your child what they are thankful for that day. As your child gets better at expressing gratitude, dig deeper. Ask why they are grateful for something and how it affected their day.

7. Share your gratitude at the dinner table.

Take a moment at dinnertime to share what you are thankful for. Go around the table allowing each family member a chance to vocalize the high point of their day.

8. Compliment others. Share the things you appreciate about another person and encourage your children to do the same.

9. Keep a gratitude journal. This can be in any form that works best for your child's age, skill level, and desire. Some kids will want to spend time writing their thoughts down. Others may be more apt to express their gratitude through drawing or painting.

10. Give someone a gift. Make a gift together for a close friend or family member. This can be something as simple as a painting for a grandparent or maybe a beaded necklace for a friend.

11. Always look for the positive. Find something positive in a frustrating situation and discuss it.

12. Practice turning complaints into praises. Coach your children to reword their complaint into something that they appreciate instead.

13. Create a gratitude jar. Write small notes of gratitude and add them to a jar then watch it fill up! Encourage your kids to add to it anytime they are feeling thankful for something or someone.

14. Take gratitude walks. While you walk, look for the simple pleasures in the day, such as the warm sun or the birds singing and express appreciation for them. Use this time to ask your kids what they are grateful for.

15. Work through envy. Help your child work through any feelings of jealousy they may have. Envy can come when we are not feeling thankful for what we have, and are focusing instead on what others have.

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