

Gratitude Games and Ideas for Kids

Date / Time

So far today, have you brought kind awareness to your:

Thoughts? Heart? Body? None of the Above

By now, you're probably thinking about all the good things that can happen when gratitude is incorporated into one's life. This is particularly true for children, as building a sense of gratitude can be an excellent way to boost resilience, enhance well-being, and encourage a positive outlook on life.

Seven Tips for Fostering Gratitude

This piece describes seven ways to encourage the development of gratitude in children.

These tips include:

1. Modeling and teaching gratitude. This is often the best way to teach any skill or trait you would like your child to develop.
2. Spending time with your kids and being mindful with them. Quality time is not only a positive experience for both children and adults, but they also offer opportunities to model empathy and cultivate a sense of appreciation for the things you love.
3. Support your child's autonomy. Allowing your children to be at least semi-autonomous helps them to build their strengths and talents, and encourages them to take ownership of their actions.
4. Use your children's strengths to fuel gratitude. Encouraging your children to use their unique strengths to their benefit and the benefit of others offers opportunities for your children to be helpful and cooperative with others, enhancing their ability to feel and express gratitude.

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5. Help focus and support kids to achieve intrinsic goals. In steering children away from the pursuit of materialistic goals and toward intrinsic goals, you can help children learn to fulfill their own higher-level needs and aid in their development and success. Savor their accomplishments with them to boost their sense of gratitude even more.

6. Encourage helping others and nurturing relationships. Volunteer to help others with your child, and encourage them to offer a helping hand to loved ones in need of support. Helping them to develop strong, positive relationships is a great way to make sure they have something to be grateful for.

7. Help kids find what matters to them. Assisting your child in finding what he or she is passionate about is a good way to help them find gratitude as well. A sense of purpose or meaning in life helps us all to discover what we love, contribute to society, and practice gratitude.

Gratitude in the Classroom

If you'd like to build gratitude in your children or the children you teach or mentor, try these suggestions:

1) Create a classroom gratitude book for each child to take home and add a page of pictures and descriptions of what they're grateful for. Switch out each week so every child has the opportunity to add a page.

2) Take a picture of each student holding a large piece of paper with one thing they are grateful for written on it, frame the picture, and send it home as a gift.

3) Create a gratitude collage or bulletin board, with pictures of things each student is grateful for.

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4) Have each child write down something they are thankful for on strips of paper, and use the strips to create a gratitude chain, which can be hung around the classroom.

5) Hold a “Special Friends Day” before Thanksgiving, in which each student brings someone special to class. Each pair will write or draw something they are thankful for, which will be posted on a bulletin board.

6) Have the children create gratitude surprise sticky notes. Hand these sticky notes out to students and have them write down something they’re grateful for in regards to someone else around the school, then encourage them to “deliver” the note to that person’s locker, mailbox, or classroom door.

Gratitude Exercises for Children

The top three exercises according to Chris Bergstrom and Blissful Kids are:

The Gratitude Journal. Provide your child with a journal and encourage them to write down five things they are grateful for each day. Bedtime is a great time to practice this exercise, since children will have the whole day from which to choose what to write about.

The ABCs of Gratitude. Have your child sit comfortably and close their eyes. Tell them to list things they are grateful for, beginning with “A” and working all the way through the alphabet to “Z.” Don’t be surprised if this exercise gets a little silly – it’s bound to get silly at some point, so just embrace it and enjoy the laughter with your child!

Bedtime Thank You. This can be incorporated into the gratitude journal or practiced as a standalone exercise. Help your child to think of happy things that happened to them during their day. They can simply say these things aloud, write them down in their journal, draw a picture of them, or simply think of them. This exercise can ensure that your child drifts off to sleep with a heart full of love and gratitude.

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