



Pearson

# Being kind, being thankful



Everyone is challenged by the physical restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many people naturally feel anxious and isolated. Practising kindness and feeling gratitude for others' kindness to you not only builds stronger relationships with our family, extended family, friends and neighbours but improves our sense of wellbeing and happiness. Often the giver benefits just as much, or even more than the receiver.



## Activities

### Kindness challenge

Challenge your child to perform three acts of kindness for anyone they wish over the next week (e.g. writing/drawing a letter or card to grandparents and sending via video, email or normal mail, reading a story or playing a game with a younger sibling, making something to share, etc). Keep doing three acts of kindness each week.

### A letter of appreciation

First discuss how your family supports each other. Provide some starters, such as: Who in our family plays games with you, makes nice things to eat, cuddles you or comforts you, takes you to the park? etc. Talk about writing/scripting a card, letter, poem, short imaginative text, email or video to a family member, teacher or a friend saying how you appreciate the ways in which others are kind to you, and help and support you. You could include:

- How did their actions make things better for you?
- What effort did they make?
- Why did they do that for you?
- What can you do for them?

The message could also be to health workers and people that are helping our community at this time.

### Song and video/ movie hunt

Ask children to search for songs, video clips or movies on the theme of human kindness, compassion and support for each other. Do the same for gratitude.

### Gratitude activities

Feeling and expressing gratitude is one of the components of the Bounce Back! curriculum unit, Looking on the bright side where students learn about two types of gratitude:

- Gratitude towards people: appreciating and feeling grateful for what another person has done for you, e.g. for their kindness, for helping you, for teaching you
- Gratitude for the good things in your life or the good things in your day.

### Gratitude hand tracing

Each child traces around their hand and then writes four things they are grateful for (one for each finger and a smiley face on the thumb). Encourage them to focus more on the actions and behaviour of people, rather than on material things. Encourage them to be specific - what did the person do that made things better for them? For example, instead of saying, 'I am grateful for my family' they could write, 'I am grateful for Ava because she let me wear her favourite jumper'.

### Gratitude jar or box

Each child makes a gratitude jar or box and writes one thing they are grateful for each day for a couple of weeks to put inside. They can decorate it with paint, stickers, glitter, etc.

## Gratitude gift box

Children can make a gratitude box as a gift for someone special. The box contains five or more thank you messages/cards that specify what the receiver of the gift has done for them. They could think about:

- How this person's actions made things better for them?
- What effort did they make for them?
- Why might they have done that for them?

Each thank you message could be written on a self-made greeting card with a photo or drawing of a beautiful image or an actual photo of them with that person. Some ideas for things they might be grateful for are a shared activity, such as songs, books, games, movies, something they have done for you or something funny you shared together. This could be a great gift for someone's birthday, Mother's or Father's Day or for someone who needs a boost.

## Counting thank you

Each child counts how often they say 'thank you' in one day. They can use a page of ten large circles and cross off a circle, each time they say thank you. They only count things they are genuinely thankful for. In the circle, they can record who they said thank you to and what the other person did for them.

## Gratitude maths

Ask children to write a list of 20 things they are grateful for. Assign \$1 for the little things, \$5 for the middle size things and \$10 for the big things. How much pretend money do you have?

## Gratitude video

Children make a short video clip on aspects of their home life they are grateful for.

## Gratitude poem

Children write a sensory poem that encapsulates something they are grateful for, prompted by 'I see, I hear, I smell, I feel, I taste, I am thankful for...'  
For example, *The Beach*:

<b>I see:</b>	Sun glistening on water
<b>I hear:</b>	Waves crash on the sand
<b>I smell:</b>	Briny seaweed
<b>I feel:</b>	Water running through my hands
<b>I taste:</b>	My salty fingers
<b>I am thankful for:</b>	The beach

## Gratitude fortnightly photos

Every day for two weeks, your child takes one photo of something they are grateful for - people, places, objects, pets, etc. Under each photo they write a caption to focus their attention on why they chose this photo. It can be just small good things that they see, smell, hear, taste and do, such as the taste of an icecream, a big smile from a family member, the sunset, etc. The photos could be made into a slide show or a photobook.

## Why kindness and gratitude work

Not only do children's sense of wellbeing increase after acts of kindness at home, but also their acceptance from peers at school. Increasing peer acceptance is related to a variety of important academic and social outcomes including being less likely to be bullied.

Identifying things you are grateful for also helps children to be happier, more optimistic and more satisfied with family, school, friends and themselves. It also leads to them being kinder.

### References

- 'Kindness Counts: Prompting Prosocial Behavior in Preadolescents Boosts Peer Acceptance and Well-Being', Kristin Layous, S. Katherine Nelson, Eva Oberle, Kimberly A. Schonert-Reichl, Sonja Lyubomirsky, *PLOS ONE*, December 26, 2012.
- 'Counting blessings in early adolescents: An experimental study of gratitude and subjective well-being', Froh, Sefick, Emmons, *Journal of School Psychology*, Volume 46, Issue 2, April 2008.



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