



Counselor's Corner

December 2015

Ways to Foster Gratitude in Kids

In recent years, studies have been done to examine gratitude and well-being in children. One study linked gratitude to greater social support and protection from stress and depression over time. In addition, research suggests that grateful young adolescents are happier, more optimistic, and are more satisfied with life.

Knowing the benefits of gratitude, how can we foster more gratitude in children? The book *Making Grateful Kids: The Science of Building Character* by Jeffery Froh and Giacomo Bono contains strategies for encouraging gratefulness in children. Here are essential themes that underlie the 32 strategies outlined in the book.

Model and teach gratitude

Children often emulate their parents. Be sure to express gratitude yourself through words, writing and acts of reciprocity to teach your child how to be grateful. Help your child appraise the benefits they receive from others.

Spend time with your kids and be mindful when with them

Children love spending time with their parents. When you give them quality time (without distractions, smartphones etc.) you model empathy for your child. This is the most important emotion for developing gratitude and moral behavior.

Use your child's strengths to fuel gratitude

Encourage your child to use their strengths to thank and be kind to others. For example, if your

child is a good artist, have them draw a picture for a thank you card.

Help focus and support to achieve intrinsic goals

Children can easily be motivated to pursue extrinsic or materialistic goals such as acquiring possessions which usually lead to less fulfilling social relationships. It is important to help children pursue intrinsic goals, such as helping out in the community. To help them make the most of these intrinsic goals, be sure to encourage your child to savor their accomplishments and encourage them to thank others who have helped them reach their goal.

Encourage helping others

Helping others and being generous will help foster gratitude. Teach your child through your actions that other people matter. Encourage them to be thoughtful, to thank others, and to be cooperative, helpful and giving.

Help kids find what matters to them

It is important for everyone to have a purpose in life. Help your child find a passion that resonates with them. As they connect to a bigger picture, their sense of gratitude will grow.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if the need arises. We are here to help your child be successful.

Adopted from "The Greater Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life" from the University of California, Berkley.

For further details or information, contact your child's guidance counselor:

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