



# Counselor's Corner

November / December 2020

## Practicing Gratitude Can Promote Well-Being

As we continue to navigate COVID-19 together, its effects on our everyday lives can feel overwhelming. Undoubtedly, it is not an easy task to provide our children with a sense of consistency and normalcy in a time filled with uncertainty and change. We may not be able to revise this reality, at the moment. However, we *can* focus our energies on "controlling what we can control" and practicing gratitude for the events that enrich our days, no matter how small.

A growing number of studies have looked at the impact of gratitude on our overall health. The results show benefits to both our physical and emotional health, with a recent study highlighting the direct relationship between gratitude and happiness among young children. Luckily, gratitude can be added to our daily routines without increasing our "to-do" and "to-learn" lists. Teaching polite manners, such as saying "thank you," isn't the only way to promote gratitude in children. Here are some key tips to help build a habit of gratitude in your children.

**-Focus on what went "right" each day.** Take a couple of minutes at bedtime to write down or talk about at least one thing, no matter how small, or one part of the day that you and your family are grateful for. By focusing on the positive parts of the day, gratitude helps set us up for a positive outlook for the day to come.

**-Don't save conversations about gratitude for Thanksgiving.** Whether driving back home or enjoying a family game night, talking about the people you are grateful for in your life—and why—can go a long way. Reflect on positive traits in others that make us feel grounded, loved, and connected.

**-Promote sincere verbal or written expressions of thankfulness.** Creating a habit of thankful expression helps to increase self-esteem, mental strength, and positive social behaviors—such as helping, sharing, and volunteering. All of these are vital to strengthen our resiliency, which we all need right now.

**-Find ways to help others in need.** Help children and teens provide service to their communities by finding causes they are interested in, such as raising money for charity or making cards or notes for a nursing home. They will gain a sense of purpose and develop skills that will help them succeed in life.

**-Be a role model.** One way to teach your children to be more grateful is by actually being more grateful yourself. Show them your appreciation on a regular basis, and they will learn to follow in your footsteps.

Remember, spending just a few minutes a day to practice gratitude with our families can have a positive impact on how we address stressful situations life unexpectedly throws our way. It is especially effective as part of an overall family wellness plan that focuses on healthy eating, sleeping, screen time habits, and daily physical activity.

*\*Adapted from [healthychildren.org](http://healthychildren.org) from the American Academy of Pediatrics*

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