

Attitude of Gratitude

Thank You God for the world so sweet, Thank You God for the food we eat, Thank You God for the birds that sing, Thank You God for everything!' A popular rhyme that we all must have heard from our children when they were small. In school, mealtimes would start by singing this song. Young children enjoy the simple pleasures of life- an ice cream treat on a hot sunny day, going to the park with parents, lots of hugs and kisses from parents and other caregivers. Then, as they grow up and begin the fast paced life, the simple, everyday pleasures start going unnoticed. With the constant flow of information, distractions and other pressing demands of the modern world, it is easy to feel overwhelmed or empty. We may start to focus on the one negative thing in the mountain of good things, a cognitive bias called 'Negative bias' by psychologists.

This is why Gratitude is an important value to reestablish in our children. Even when your child is having a hard day, encouraging him/her to identify some good things (for that day) in their life can help them to feel better. Feeling grateful can balance out challenging emotions, lead to positive emotions like happiness and contentment, influence our behavior and make us a better decision maker.



Let's begin by asking ourselves the following questions: -

1. Do you feel like you have a lot to be thankful for in your life?
2. Do you appreciate a wide variety of people/ have many moments in life that you are thankful for?

Parent, showing unconditional love and support to your children is essential for their self-esteem and reducing their stress. Do not hesitate to show physical affection when needed, even after they grow older. Show your gratitude to the Almighty for being surrounded by a family who loves you and having children who bring joy in your lives. On realizing how much we are thankful for- whether it is family, happy

memories or materialistic things, we can model that gratitude to our children.

Younger children experience gratitude in a different manner than older children. A small child may be delighted when someone brings him/her a chocolate. An older child may recognize the thoughtfulness of the person in remembering the favorite type of chocolate and recognize that the person brought the chocolates to express his/her love. As a result, as he/she learns more about it, the appreciation grows. The small child may say thank you as a result of prompting or habit. The older child may express gratitude because he or she is truly grateful.

The four components of gratitude as an experience are as follows:

- The **first component** is how we **NOTICE** the happy moments/things in our lives for which we are grateful for.
- **Secondly**, is how we **THINK** about them? E.g.: - You have planned a birthday surprise for your child. Asking questions such as "Why do you think we planned this surprise?" will help your child realize the efforts taken by you and the thought behind it.
- **Thirdly**, how we **FEEL** about what we have been given. Ask questions which help you connect your positive emotions to the things you receive. "How do you feel about the birthday party? What exactly about it makes you happy/excited?"
- The **fourth component** is what we **DO** to express our gratitude in return. "Is there a way you want to show how you feel about this surprise?", "Can you share your happy feelings by expressing your thankfulness in return?"

Here are some **simple ways for parents to help children understand and experience gratitude:** -

Gratitude Board or Gratitude Jar: - Create a family bulletin board where everyone can add notes about what they're thankful for. You could do this by using colorful sticky notes or a whiteboard and colorful markers. A full board also makes you realize that you have so many good things going on in life. Keep a jar in an easily accessible place in the house and keep some slips of paper handy. Encourage everyone to write down and put it in the jar.

Establish a Gratitude Ritual: - Make it a habit to regularly express gratitude in your family. During dinner or at bedtime, the entire family can share one thing they're grateful for from their day.

Turn challenges into growth moments: - Ask questions that help your child discover the potential silver lining in a tough situation. Ask, "What is something positive that you learnt from a tough situation like this?" In a really tough situation, asking that question too soon might seem insensitive and may need some time. Helping your child do these often will teach them to do it on their own and they'll start to see that they have a lot to be grateful for, even on their worst days. This will help in building resilience.

Avoid Overindulgence: - Resist the urge to shower children with materialistic things to show your love. As dietitians say, "everything in moderation," this includes buying things for your child. While it is completely normal to give them the occasional treat, make sure not to make it a habit. Buying them anything they want as soon as they want can dilute the feelings of gratitude and lower the value/respect for their possessions.

Gratitude helps you to focus on what's there instead of what isn't.

By:
Niti Parekh
Pooja Bajarla
P.G. Garodia School (ICSE)