



Expressing Gratitude

Adapted from The Children's Trust.

The act of expressing thanks teaches our children more than just manners...

Encouraging our children to say “thank you”- whether it’s with a card, phone call or other heartfelt gesture - is a critical social skill that will serve them well not just during the holidays, but also throughout their life.

Research now proves that the happiest and most empathic children are the ones who feel a sense of appreciation for life. Those studies show that because kids feel grateful, they are actually more joyful, determined, optimistic, resilient, less stressed and even healthier. Here are a few tips to instill year-round gratitude in our children:

Practicing Good Behaviour

The fastest way to boost character is through example. So, the more we show thanks for everyday considerations that might otherwise go unnoticed, the more likely our children will follow suit. Let our children see us conveying our appreciation with hugs, kind words, flowers, hand written notes...even a quick email or thank you text sent with a smiling selfie is a genuine show of gratitude we can model to our children. Don’t limit our praise to only those we know well, a warm thank you to a helpful acquaintance or stranger can make an even greater impression on our children.

Managing Letdowns

Even the sweetest child can stumble into brat territory when hit with disappointment, such as a birthday or Christmas gift that may not be age appropriate or has nothing to do with their interests. A hard lesson for children to learn is that they’re really thanking the person - not for the gift but for the thoughtfulness behind it. Make this an easier pill to swallow by reminding our children of the time and consideration that goes into gift-giving and that the intent is to bring them joy. It may also be a good idea to practice enthusiastic (but not fake) thank yous with our children prior to any occasion where they may receive a gift.

Personalizing Appreciation

Gratitude isn’t learnt from lectures, but from routines. Start simple family rituals that will help our children adopt an attitude of gratitude and appreciate their fortunes. Help our children count their blessings every night by reviewing all of the things and people they’re grateful for and why. This can be turned into a game by challenging them to acknowledge at least three things they’re thankful for about every member of the family, picking a new individual each night.

Children and adolescents are naturally self-centered; it’s up to us parents to teach them the art of giving thanks. The sooner our children learn to embrace and practice gratitude, the greater their chances will be for a happier, more fulfilled life.



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