



University of Kentucky
College of Agriculture,
Food and Environment
Cooperative Extension Service

PARENT HEALTH BULLETIN



NOVEMBER 2021

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: THE GIFT OF GRATITUDE



During the holidays this year, take time to create a routine of expressing gratitude among your family. Research has shown that young children who count their blessings gain multiple health benefits including increased joy, school success, generosity, and even sleeping better. Teenagers can also benefit from focusing on gratitude. High school students who score high on gratitude have more friends, higher grades, and are less likely to abuse drugs or have behavioral problems at school.

By learning gratitude, kids become sensitive to the feelings of others, develop empathy, and become less selfish. Kids start to appreciate what they have rather than focusing on what they wish they had. An attitude of gratitude is not always easy, but kids of any age can start to learn the skills and practices that will help them be thankful throughout their life.

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Have your kids write down one thing each day on a piece of paper that they are thankful for and add it to a gratitude jar. At the end of the month go back through every piece of paper together and see all the wonderful blessings the month has brought.



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An added benefit of giving thanks as a family is that gratitude can increase your connection to your kids. Research has shown that gratitude improves relationships by fostering a stronger, more positive and genuine bond. Gratitude starts at home and is a skill that everyone can learn. It takes practice to build a mindset of thankfulness, but the more you practice, the easier it will become for your kids to feel grateful. For that reason, here are some ways to make gratitude part of your daily or weekly family routine:

- **Share before bed.** Sharing gratitude right before bed can help with relaxation and improve sleep. Building a gratitude practice into your kid's regular bed routine can help you stay consistent.
- **Gratitude jar.** Have your kids write down one thing each day on a piece of paper that they are thankful for and add it to your gratitude jar. At the end of the month go back through every piece of paper together and see all the wonderful blessings the month has brought.
- **Take gratitude walks.** Use this time to ask your kids what they are grateful for. While you walk, observe nature all around you. Have kids notice

what they hear, smell, or feel. After the walk, offer gratitude to one thing from your walk.

- **Give back.** Depending on your kids' ages, they could help a neighbor down the street, grandparents, or volunteer time as a family to an animal shelter, soup kitchen, or non-profit.
- **Write thank you notes.** There are plenty of opportunities throughout the year for your child to thank those who have done something special for them. Encourage your child to send a handwritten thank you note to teachers at the end of the school year, coaches, kind pediatricians, helpful librarians, and families who host them for overnights or parties.

REFERENCES:

- <https://www.health.harvard.edu/healthbeat/giving-thanks-can-make-you-happier>
- <https://www.nationwidechildrens.org/family-resources-education/700childrens/2020/05/gratitude>
- <https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/gratitude.html>

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