

Forest Charter School

NOVEMBER CHARACTER TRAIT OF THE MONTH: **GRATITUDE**

Gratitude is a feeling, not a behavior. Like so many other traits, it is best taught by example. A daily diary [study](#) found that the more parents took action to cultivate gratitude in their children on a certain day (such as by talking with their kids about experiences of receiving something from others), the more their kids showed gratitude on that same day—compared to the days when the parents took less action and compared to other kids whose parents took less action.

Why Does It Matter?

Children aren't natural-born gratitude experts. Gratitude develops over time, as cognitive abilities mature, and it takes a lot of practice. Parent-child conversations can help by deepening children's understanding of gratitude by breaking it down into parts and raising their awareness of those parts.

Making the effort to [help children cultivate gratitude](#) pays off. Grateful kids and teens tend to be more engaged in their schoolwork and hobbies, get better grades, and be more satisfied with school, family, community, friends, and themselves. They are more likely to have better [social support](#), give more emotional support to others, and use their strengths to [better their community](#). Overall, they are happier, more optimistic, and more satisfied with their lives.

Reflection Before the Practice

For parents/caregivers: Take a moment to think of something kind that someone else did for you recently. Why do you think they did this? How did it make you feel? How did you show your appreciation? Were you encouraged to do something kind for someone else?

Instructions

As parents and caregivers, we teach and expect our children to say “thank you” when they receive gifts. (*Note: This may apply to only certain cultures.*) And while that's one important part, gratitude also involves other social and emotional skills that need to be broken down and practiced. Researchers have identified four parts that make up the gratitude experience:

- What we NOTICE in our lives for which we can be grateful
- How we THINK about why we have been given those things
- How we FEEL about the things we have been given
- What we DO to express appreciation in turn

Discussing these parts with your children can teach them about gratitude. The graphic below shows some examples of **NOTICE-THINK-FEEL-DO** activities. And, by the way, thank you for reading this!!

From Greater Good In Education <https://ggie.berkeley.edu/>
Want to watch a great video? <https://youtu.be/jLjVOvZufNM>

5 WAYS TO GROW YOUR GRATITUDE



Visual From <https://www.hprc-online.org/>

1 3 FUNNY THINGS

Think about 3 funny things that happened today.

How did you feel at those times?

2 GRATEFUL CHAT

Choose a time and place to make this a habit (such as your dinner table, picking kids up from school, bedtime...). Practice asking your partner, your kids, or a friend:

"What was your favorite part of the day?" or "What went well today?"

3 MENTAL SUBTRACTION

Reflect on an aspect of your life for which you are grateful. How would your life be different without it?

What might have happened if...

4 FIND YOUR SILVER LINING

Think about a difficult life event, and consider how that experience made you stronger.

How did you grow? What strengths came from your experience?

5 GRATITUDE VISIT

Write a letter to someone who made a difference in your life. Then go visit that special person—whether it's next week or sometime soon.

During your visit, read your letter out loud. And give it to her or him before you leave.

Here are a couple of tips for nurturing gratitude in teens:

- **Don't give up.** You may need to modify family gratitude traditions or let your teen shape them, but don't abandon them completely. They are likely more important to your teen than you know.
- **Gratitude is a practice, not a script.** Avoid "correcting" your teen if he or she expresses gratitude about something that doesn't meet your expectations. It is okay if your teen goes in and out of taking gratitude seriously around you.
- **Modeling still matters.** While they may never tell you this, your actions still matter. A lot. Practice gratitude.
- **Change what you are looking for.** Your teen may no longer want to hold your hand and say "I'm grateful for..." but look for other ways that they are acting grateful through their actions towards others, their language, and if they are getting involved in community or school issues.
- **Give credit to others.** Teens are vulnerable to the "self-serving bias" which means that when something good happens they think it is because of them and when something bad happens they blame the circumstances or someone else. Encourage them to think of how others have helped them succeed *and* to take responsibility for their own actions.
- **Expand the conversation.** Talk to your teen things like rights versus privileges and equity versus justice. Gratitude calls on us to be more aware of our relationships with others.