

COUNSELING DEPARTMENT

The Attitude of Gratitude

As Thanksgiving approaches, people often discuss what they are thankful for. At times this can be a difficult topic because of the challenges we have faced. For instance, the COVID Pandemic and all its uncertainties over the past several months. These long-standing challenges can begin to take a toll on us, mentally and emotionally. That is why it is important to consider how having gratitude can help preserve what does make us happy and help us to find the good and work towards feeling better.

What IS gratitude?

- ❖ The quality of being thankful; readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness.

The Research Behind the Good of Gratitude:

This research on gratitude was conducted by two psychologists from the University of Miami:

- 3 groups: one wrote about things they were thankful for; one wrote a list of things that irritated them/upset them; the last wrote about any events (positive or negative) that impacted their week.
- After 10 weeks, those that expressed gratitude were found to maintain a more optimistic attitude and generally felt better.
- During this time, the gratitude group was also found to engage in exercise and had to go to the physicians less, suggesting an impact on overall health. Typically, people that show gratitude are more inclined to engage in activities that are beneficial for their health.
- Gratitude allows people to appreciate what they currently have rather than believing attainment of something else can bring them happiness.

How can you SHOW gratitude?

- Be an active listener when talking with others
- Make eye contact with the person you are interacting with
- Give out a kind compliment
- Be considerate of others and their feelings
- Offer support to those who have supported you
- Write or make something for someone
- Perform random acts of kindness

- Be polite and courteous towards others
- Share with others how you are thankful for them.

How can you BE grateful?

- Keep a gratitude journal of the daily things that you are appreciative of
- Be mindful of the positive things you have in your life
- Consider your five senses and what you enjoy by using them
- Have a visual reminder of what you are grateful for, such as a picture collage
- Take on new opportunities that would allow for you to be grateful for what you have
- Practice mindfulness by focusing on the present
- Be mindful of the impact of your words and actions
- Mentally thank someone if expressing gratitude is harder to do at times
- Spend time with those you care about when you can
- Embrace challenges and turn them into opportunities
- Start off each day by writing down one good thing you are grateful for.

How can having gratitude improve our mental health?

1. Gratitude can shift attention away from negative emotions.

As we practice gratitude skills like gratitude journaling, we begin to use more positive words to describe our lives, which has been proven to positively impact our overall thinking and view on how we feel things.

2. Gratitude can make you feel better even if you don't express it outwardly.

If you practice the skill of writing a gratitude letter or list but don't feel comfortable sharing your thoughts just yet, that's okay! It has been proven that the act of expressing gratitude independently can positively improve your mindset even if you don't share it with others yet.

3. Gratitude keeps getting better with time.

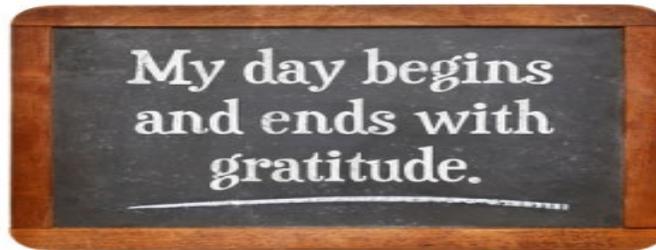
Studies show that the more you engage in gratitude activities the more your mental health improves over time, getting better and better! This also means that although you may not feel drastically different right away, if you stay consistent, then positive changes will occur more often.

4. Gratitude is good for your brain.

For those who engage in gratitude activities, studies have shown a physical improvement in our brains functioning! For instance, gratitude activates the area of the brain for decision making and learning which can be related to being more attentive and willing to show gratitude.

- More interesting facts about gratitude and its benefits on mental health!

- Showing gratitude can put you in a better mood; those who make this a habit regularly are shown to have lower rates of stress and depression.
- Gratitude can make you more optimistic, studies suggest that it can lead to a more positive outlook.
- Gratitude can bring you closer to those you are close with.



How to Reinforce Gratitude through Family Activities

Talking points at the kitchen table:

1. Why are you grateful for school?
2. Why are you grateful for family?
3. Why are you grateful for friends?
4. Why are you grateful for your teacher?
5. Why are you grateful for skills/talents?
6. Why are you grateful for good health?
7. Why are you grateful for nature?
8. Why are you grateful for your community?
9. Who in your life are you grateful for?
10. How can you show your gratitude?

Alphabet Gratitude:

When going for a walk or a car ride, have your children name what they are grateful for that correlates to each letter of the Alphabet.

A.... Air that I breathe

B... Being safe

C... Caring teachers

Gratitude Journal:

Take 5 minutes every day to write down what you are grateful for. I am grateful for.... This activity teaches children to see things in a more optimistic light.

Gratitude Jar:

How to start a gratitude jar in your home:

Supplies needed:

1. Empty Jar
2. Strips of paper
3. Writing utensil

Every morning each member of your family should write on a strip of paper what they are grateful for and place it in the jar. Soon you will see a full jar representing all of things in life we have to be grateful for.

The Power of Thank You:

Teach your children to say thank you in multiple ways... through letters, cards, pictures, words, and random acts of kindness. These messages go a long way to show your appreciation of others.

Gratitude Gift:

Print/draw a picture of someone you want to show appreciation for. Think of all the reasons you are grateful for this person. Write the ideas around the picture and give it as a gift.

Grandma:



- Always there for me
- Gives the best hugs
- Helps me when I need it
- Listens to me
- I love when we bake together
- Loves me unconditionally