



WHY GRATITUDE?

Especially around Thanksgiving, people talk about what they're thankful for and how important it is to have gratitude. However, gratitude doesn't automatically fix every problem or even prevent future problems. So why is it important to have gratitude?

Besides showing good manners, saying "thank you" and showing gratitude can benefit mental and physical health. Some of those benefits include the following:

- **Reduced stress**
- **Increased happiness**
- **Boost of self-esteem**
- **Improved sleep**
- **Increased optimism for the future**
- **Increased resilience**

In addition, showing gratitude can help people show more kindness. Acknowledging what others do for them and how it makes them feel can make them want to do likewise for others. This can help people strengthen and improve existing relationships as well as help them make new relationships.

Helping Your Children Cultivate Gratitude

Perhaps especially during the past year and a half, your children may sometimes find it hard to find things to be grateful for. During these times, you can help your children be proactive about creating feeling gratitude instead of waiting for something good to come along to be grateful for.

Tips for Cultivating Gratitude

- **Encourage them to smile.** Your children could find it easier to feel grateful with a smile on their faces. Additionally, smiling at others can help your children feel good. And there's an added bonus of extra happiness when others smile back.
- **Model how to avoid comparison.** Instead of comparing your situation or life to that of others, practice acknowledging what others have (in a sincere tone) and saying what you're thankful for. For example, "Her new car looks so nice. Good for her! I'm thankful I have a car to drive too." The more your children practice this mindset, the more automatic it will become for them to recognize and be grateful for what they have.
- **Write thank-you letters.** As a family, sit down and write thank-you letters to people who have blessed your life, recently or in the past. Consider writing a letter of gratitude to your children. Encourage them to write thank-you letters to themselves as well.
- **Practice mindfulness.** Teach your children to take a moment to think about what someone did for them and what it means to them each time they say "thank you" to someone. Challenge your children to also keep a gratitude journal and to write a few things they're thankful for each day without repeating. This can help your children be aware of what there is to be grateful for.