



Growing Our Gratitude

It's important to practice healthy habits that can boost our mental wellness and promote a positive mental outlook. One thing we can do that doesn't require a lot of time but has many positive benefits is to show gratitude. While acknowledging our disappointments and grieving what we have lost is also natural and healthy, it is equally important to recognize and appreciate what we have in our life. Research shows that people who think about the good things in their life are healthier – and happier! They feel more energized, sleep better, have stronger social connections, and feel better about themselves – including having fewer physical problems, symptoms and a stronger immune system. Gratitude helps us grow mentally and grow as a person.

Instructions:

Use the guide below to teach your child about mental health and gratitude. Three worksheets are included to help you talk about gratitude, practice gratitude and send messages of gratitude to family and friends.

- When your throat hurts or we break a bone, we go to the doctor.
- Our throat and our bones are all part of our physical health. As part of our physical health, we do things to help us stay healthy. One example is eating foods that are good for us. What are other things we do to keep ourselves physically healthy?
- **DISCUSSION: Examples can include exercising, not smoking, brushing and flossing our teeth, going to the doctor, wearing sunscreen, etc.**
- Sometimes we can feel okay but then we get a sore throat or a broken bone that makes us feel not okay.
- That same thing can happen to our thoughts and feelings. Our thoughts and feelings are part of our mental health.
- Sometimes we feel happy and excited. When are times you feel happy or excited?
- **DISCUSSION: Give examples of times when you feel happy and excited to lead the conversation.**
- Other times we might feel sad, worried or confused. When are times you might feel this way?
- **DISCUSSION: Give examples of times when you may be sad or worried.**

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- It's normal to feel all of these things – happy, excited, sad, worried or confused. But people sometimes can feel sad, worried or confused all the time and may need help with their thoughts and feelings. If our friends are feeling this way, we want to be a good friend to them by supporting them, especially when they are having a hard time.
- One thing we can do to boost each other up and help with our mental health and wellness is grow our gratitude. We can do this by practicing gratitude. Gratitude means talking about what we are thankful for, showing that we appreciate things in our life and showing kindness.
- By practicing gratitude or thankfulness, it makes us healthier and happier. Practicing it helps our brain so we feel less negative emotions.
- We're going to practice gratitude and thankfulness to grow our mental wellness.
- **DISTRIBUTE: "Growing Our Gratitude" Handout**
- We are going to think of things we have to be grateful for. One of those things is yourself! We're going to complete this handout to practice. Write down:
 - What you like about yourself.
 - What you are thankful for right now
 - A person or two you are thankful for and why
- **DISCUSSION: Give examples for each question. Make sure to highlight what you like about yourself and others, which will help a child identify characteristics they like about themselves, e.g., I like that I'm an organized person, as opposed to external attributes/items like shoes or clothes. For older kids this normalizes being able to say things we like about ourselves. As we get older, it becomes harder to do this and sometimes even less socially acceptable to do so. Talk about the answers on the worksheet. Praise your child for sharing and talk further about the things they are thankful for.**
- Then we're going to make notes for the people we are grateful for to create a network of support. We can write notes to the people you listed earlier or come up with different people. It can make a big difference to know someone appreciates you!
- **COMPLETE: Gratitude Cards. Mail or drop these off at someone's house.**
- Remember, we all can help each other stay mentally healthy by supporting each other and talking to a trusted adult if needed. **DISCUSSION:** Give examples of a trusted adult: Such as me, your coach, your teachers, etc. And we can help ourselves by practicing our gratitude and thankfulness each day.
- **NOTE: If you'd like to practice gratitude throughout the week, use the "7 Days of Growing our Gratitude" sheet. You can use this as a tool to share at the dinner table and talk about what you are thankful for. At the end of each week, reflect on the things you were grateful for that week to help build on the practice of gratitude.**