

3 STEPS TO RAISING MORE GRATEFUL KIDS



1. DEFINE GRATITUDE

The first step towards raising more grateful kids and creating a gratitude mindset in your home is to make sure everyone understands what gratitude is. **Ask your kids what it means to be, feel, and act grateful.** Make it an ongoing family discussion and provide examples. Be clear about what gratitude is, and isn't, and what you want it to look like in your home.

2. MODEL GRATITUDE

Grateful kids take practice. **Like any other skill we teach our children, the more they practice gratitude the better they get.** At first, there's a good chance this step will feel like an uphill battle, and that your efforts aren't paying off. But the more you keep at it, setting a consistent example of what gratitude looks and sounds like, and giving your kids opportunities to practice themselves, the more gratitude will become a natural go-to for everyone.



3. SET UP A GRATITUDE ROUTINE

Kids thrive on routine. **Including a gratitude activity in your family's daily routine will make it an easy, expected part of your day.** It will also spark conversations on the topic. Start with something simple. For example, at the dinner table each night, have everyone share something they are thankful for from the day. The next night, you can challenge each other to think of something new. Then build on your routine from there!

DEFINING GRATITUDE continued...



Ask your kids what it means to be grateful.

This might feel like a waste of time, especially if your kids are older. But

it's easy to assume they know, and you might be surprised at their answers. There's a chance they will have trouble putting a feeling into words.

PLUS gratitude can mean a number of things:

- **appreciating** something someone has done for you.
- **being thankful** you can do something for someone else.
- **feeling gratitude** for actual, physical things or gifts.
- **valuing** a specific person and their role or influence in your life.

Gratitude can also take on different forms. It can be:

- **a spontaneous emotion** you're not expecting, towards someone or something.
- **an appreciation** that builds up over time.
- **a practice** that includes looking on purpose for things to be grateful for during the day.

Making sure everyone understands what gratitude means is an important step in raising more grateful kids and creating a culture of gratitude at home.

Carve out some time, discuss it across a number of days, write down your family's thoughts, and provide examples. **Be clear about what gratitude is, and isn't, and what you want it to look like in your home.**

notes



MODELING GRATITUDE continued...

2

I cannot tell you how many times I handed my kids something as a toddler and said, "thank you," waiting to hear

them repeat it. I remember thinking, "When is this going to happen without a reminder?" **Then one magical day, that toddler said thank you all on her own and just like that, all those repetitive hours were worth it!**

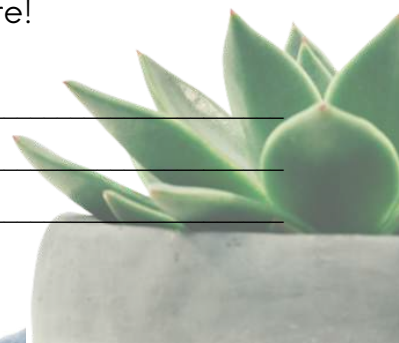
But that is just the beginning. It's important that we continue to model gratitude for our kids. **We want them to move beyond the starting point of "thank you" and into an actual way of being and thinking.** Here are some easy ways to take your family's gratitude to the next level:

- **Thank your kids often and go out of your way to add details.** For example, "Thank you so much for picking up your snack wrapper. You know how much I like a clean house and it was nice of you to think of that!"
- **Thank your spouse in front of your kids in the same way.** For example, "Thank you for unloading the dishwasher. It makes the day so much easier when we work together and I don't have to stare at those dishes."

- **Encourage thank you notes,** even for small things and deeds. Help your kids write them to siblings, friends, family, or community members (like teachers, doctors, or the mail person). **The whole process of thinking about being grateful for something/someone and taking the time to tell them - this matters.** *Bonus points if the kids get to witness the positive reaction to their note!
- **Model giving thanks during hard moments.** This one is SO IMPORTANT! For example, "Gosh it is raining so hard and I know we are all wet. But I am so glad for a warm car and windshield wipers to get us home safely." Or, "I know it was totally crazy getting out of the house today, but I am so thankful you grabbed your water and that we have this fun activity to go to."

Grateful kids take practice and when we consistently model what it looks and sounds like, we can help our kids get there!

notes



SETTING UP A GRATITUDE ROUTINE *continued...*

3

If there's one thing I've learned as a teacher and mom of three, it's that kids thrive on routine. **Whether you**

operate best on a schedule or prefer the laid back approach, making gratitude an expected part of your everyday is key to raising grateful kids.

Your routine does not have to be confining or rigid. Ours takes place at dinner. We go around and everyone says something they are grateful for, something they are sorry for, and something they are hopeful for. That's it – simple and doable.

The point of a gratitude routine is for practice and to spark conversations. At dinner, we often discuss LITTLE things verses big things. For us, An A on a test is a big thing. Seeing a cardinal is a LITTLE thing. The goal is to challenge each other to go beyond what we are normally grateful for to find the things we might have overlooked.

notes

Here are some other easy ideas to help set up a gratitude routine:

- **At breakfast**, tell each person at the table one reason you are grateful to have them as your sister, brother, friend, helper, mom, dad, etc.
- **After something hard**, challenge each other to find something good.
- **At dinner**, see who can name the most LITTLE things from the day.
- **At bedtime**, write down three things you are thankful for from the day.
- **When you get in the car**, tell one nice thing someone has done for you and one nice thing you've done for someone else that day.
- **Each week, draw someone's name** from a jar and leave a surprise thank you note or picture for them to find.
- **Each month, come up with 2 family gratitude projects** (baking cookies for the police station, sending grandparents a fun video, or chalking neighbor's driveways).



4 COMMON MISTAKES PARENTS MAKE when it comes to gratitude

1 ➤ Believing everything must line up right to feel grateful.

It's easy to fall into the waiting trap. As moms, we wait for everyone to be playing nicely, for a clean house, for a quiet 5 minutes. Kids wait to make the team, for a friend to call, or for a present to arrive. **We tell ourselves "then" we will feel grateful.** The problem is, along the way we miss the chance to celebrate many smaller moments that happen right there alongside our everyday ordinary.

Tip: Have your gratitude routine encourage kids to look for small everyday things, events, and people to appreciate.

2 ➤ Thinking gratitude is only a spontaneous emotion.

It's true. Sometimes we can be surprised by feelings of gratitude. But gratitude is ultimately a skill we can practice. This means you have control over how often and how good you are at it. **As moms, this means we are also in control of how often and how good our kids are at practicing gratitude.** One of the easiest ways to pursue joy is through gratitude, which means we can also help our kids be in charge of their joy!

Tip: Practice and learn about gratitude the way you would any other skill - daily and with intention.

3 ➤ Assuming we will remember our good moments.

We can tell ourselves we will remember the good things each day but the truth is, we are busy moms just trying to get everyone's names straight. There is something about a written list and seeing that good build up over time. **Kids have an easier time believing and trusting in things when they can see them.** This includes gratitude. Writing it down helps kids trust they have and will continue to have many blessings to celebrate.

Tip: Write down your gratitude as a family and give kids the materials and help to make their own lists.

4 ➤ Giving up too soon.

Becoming a more grateful family is a journey. **Along the way, it's easy to feel like things aren't working.** When your 2-year-old refuses to say thank you, your 6-year-old begs for a new toy, or your teen complains about, well, everything. But then suddenly there will be a moment, a small (maybe large) spark of change that tells you this is working, and shows you how valuable this gratitude mindset is for your family.

Tip: Be patient. Start over if you lose focus and don't forget about your own gratitude in the process.

5 SURPRISING BENEFITS OF GRATITUDE IN KIDS

1 **LESS COMPLAINING** When we can get kids in the habit of seeing what's going well over what's not, it results in less complaining. **Kids stop making that list of all the things going wrong because it's not what they see first.** When they understand gratitude, kids are also quicker to turn it around when you ask them to appreciate what they have.

2 **BETTER PROBLEM SOLVING** When kids practice looking for the good in all situations, **they are able to see more possibilities when it comes to solving problems on their own.** Instead of immediate defeat when something goes wrong, they are able to think through more options and pick themselves up from a problem more quickly.

3 **CONTROL OVER EMOTIONS** When kids practice gratitude it becomes a more accessible emotion. **When gratitude is on their radar as a choice, it gives kids another option over frustration, sadness, or worry.** Having this more positive go-to when it comes to feelings gives kids a new tool to control emotions and see the bigger picture.

4 **BETTER RELATIONSHIPS** When kids are encouraged to express gratitude towards others, it makes it easier for them to notice and appreciate small things about family members and friends. **They become better at seeing the value and gifts others bring to the table** which can help compel them to solve arguments and get back to playing more easily.

5 **INDEPENDENCE** When kids get in the habit of seeing the positive side of things on their own, **there is less convincing, explaining, and cheering up for mom to do!** They also have the language to encourage siblings to think more positively which means less reminders from mom and more freedom for them!

*PLEASE NOTE: I am not a researcher. Like you, I am a mom constantly watching for signs that the skills and values I teach might actually be sticking! Because we all love to see those gains, right?! The benefits discussed here are my personal observations backed by my interest in and reading on the benefits of gratitude in kids and adults. I look forward to hearing from you about your own family's benefits!

BRAINSTORMING

gratitude

100 easy ideas to JUMPSTART your gratitude list!



family

siblings	holidays
parents	aunts
pets	uncles
traditions	cousins
meals	trips



home

rooms	play spots
furniture	entertainment
appliances	weekly traditions
comforts	smells & sights
decor	yard



work

coworkers	benefits
tasks	impact
commute	salary
schedule	office space
environment	stability



friends

neighbors	pictures
long-time friends	celebrations
new friends	conversations
get-togethers	traditions
memories	laughs



day-to-day

activities	carpool
errands	people you see
appointments	meals
routine	exercise
out your window	entertainment



spouse/significant other

favorite qualities	memories
time together	trips
talents	gifts
job/family role	inside jokes
help & support	comfort



kids/parents

cute things they say	teaching moments
cute things they do	adventures
quality time	care
achievements	funny comments
activities	memories



community

church	classes
school	restaurants
neighborhood	parks
volunteer activities	pools
favorite places	markets/festivals



yourself

hobbies	learning
personality traits	strengths
interests	dreams
self-care	progress
goals	achievements



environment

weather	flowers
season	temperature
music/sounds	spot in the country
nature	landscapes
animals	view

FAMILY GRATITUDE TRACKER

Name: _____ WEEKLY GOAL: _____ WEEKLY TOTAL: _____ GOAL MET?? _____ YES or NO

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Joined in a conversation about gratitude.

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