

raising HAPPINESS

Gratitude is something that can and should be practiced at home. Research shows that people who practice gratitude feel considerably happier than those in control groups: they feel more joyful, enthusiastic, interested, determined, and strong. Gratitude practitioners are also more likely to be both kind and helpful to others.



Here are some ways to teach your children to practice gratitude:

- (1) *Keep a family “gratitude journal” or lists of things family members are thankful for.*** Anything can go on the list, no matter how large or small—people, places, toys, events, nature. Let older kids be list keepers; younger kids can dictate. Variations on this theme are endless – for example, at mealtime you can go around the table and ask each family member to talk about three good things that happened that day.
- (2) *Slow down and smell the roses.*** “Savoring” good experiences can heighten positive emotions. Adults can teach kids to savor positive events by habitually expressing gratitude when nice things happen, even if they are very small things. Simply stop what you are doing and express thanks for the moment—a beautiful sunset, the chance to smile at a baby, the opportunity to be with your child.
- (3) *Write “gratitude letters” large and small.*** Large: Help kids write a thank-you letter to person that is important to them, and then encourage them to deliver it in person and read it out loud. Small: encourage kids to write unexpected thank-you notes for things other than gifts. Write notes for kind words spoken, to someone who lent a helping hand, or to say thanks for a fun day.