GRATITUDE QUESTIONS FOR KIDS

Difficulty: MODERATE | Frequency: 1X/DAY | Duration: 5 MINS

WHY YOU SHOULD TRY IT

Kids aren't natural-born gratitude experts. Gratitude develops over time, as cognitive abilities mature, and it takes a lot of practice.

But that practice pays off. Grateful kids and teens tend to be more engaged in their schoolwork and hobbies, get better grades, and be more satisfied with school, family, community, friends, and themselves. They are more likely to have better social support, give more emotional support to others, and use their strengths to better their community. Overall, they are happier, more optimistic, and more satisfied with their lives.

TIME REQUIRED

You can try this practice whenever you notice that a child may benefit from your positive support to pause and recognize something good in their life, whether it's an object or an experience. This brief, reflective conversation can last approximately five minutes.

HOW TO DO IT

As parents, caretakers, and educators, we teach and expect our kids to say "thank you" when they receive gifts. And while that's one important part, gratitude also involves other social and emotional skills that need to be broken down and practiced.

Researchers have identified four parts that make up the gratitude experience:

- What we **NOTICE** in our lives for which we can be grateful
- How we **THINK** about why we have been given those things
- How we **FEEL** about the things we have been given
- What we **DO** to express appreciation in turn

Discussing these parts with your children can teach them about gratitude. Here are some examples of **NOTICE-THINK-FEEL-DO** questions that you can ask your kids about their gratitude experiences, whether they are getting an actual present from a relative, receiving kindness from their friends, or eating a tasty meal.

NOTICE:

- What have you been given or what do you already have in your life that you are grateful for?
- Is there a gift behind the gift you are grateful for, like someone thinking or caring about you enough to give you the gift?

THINK:

- Why do you think you received this gift?
- Do you think you owe the giver something in return?
- Do you think you earned the gift because of something you did yourself?
- Do you think the gift was something the giver had to give you?

FEEL:

- Does it make you feel happy to get this gift?
- What does that feel like inside?
- What about the gift makes you feel happy?

DO:

- Is there a way you want to show how you feel about this gift?
- Does the feeling you have about this gift make you want to share that feeling by giving something to someone else?

EVIDENCE IT THAT WORKS

Hussong, A. M., Langley, H. A., Rothenberg, W. A., Coffman, J. L., Halberstadt, A. G., Costanzo, P. R., & Mokrova, I. (2018). Raising grateful children one day at a time. *Applied Developmental Science*, DOI: 10.1080/10888691.2018.1441713.

This daily diary study found that the more parents took action to cultivate gratitude in their kids on a certain day (such as by talking with their kids about experiences of receiving something from others), the more their kids showed gratitude on that same day—compared to days when the parents took less action and compared to other kids whose parents took less action.

WHY TO TRY IT

Parent–child conversations may deepen children's understanding of gratitude by breaking it down into parts and raising their awareness about those parts.

When kids can notice that someone gave them a gift intentionally and freely, they are more likely to have a stronger experience of gratitude. These questions also help kids to connect the gifts that they receive in their lives to the positive feelings they feel afterward. Prompting children to perform acts of gratitude—whether they be gestures of appreciation or paying it forward—may help them understand the different ways to express what the experience meant to them.

These discussions provide an opportunity for kids to internalize their parents' attitudes about gratitude and its value. Ultimately, they may end up feeling grateful more often.

SOURCES

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happiness, resilience, kindness, and connection, created by the Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley and HopeLab.