

# Thankfulness

What makes the world go round and round? How does a baby learn to walk?  
What makes the stars shine bright at night? Why is the color green not purple or blue or yellow?

So often, children are the ones who ask the questions that make us stop and think. They delight in discovering things for the first time, then sharing that joy of discovery with others. There are so many opportunities to speak with our children about what they encounter in their daily lives, and take them to a deeper level of appreciation for all that they find.

Imagine a world where we all arrived fully aware and conscious about where we came from, who we are, and if we knew all there was to know about the world, its history, its flora and fauna, the laws of the universe, and so on. Even the vastness of our own internal lives, our feelings, thoughts, and habits, is a great arena for discovery. How different our lives would be if there was nothing new to learn, and everything had already been discovered.

As a teacher, walking into a classroom every morning where young minds are at work, it is difficult to imagine living in such a world. In fact, there would be no need for education, parents, schools or classrooms. There would be no childhood or age of innocence. This first stage in life is an inextricable part of the process of discovery, where every journey begins. Children seem to have a sixth sense about this - because they are “new” themselves, they appreciate the freshness of the world around them. When children begin to experience this joy of discovery, it is important to recognize this as a teachable moment for instilling a sense of gratitude and thankfulness for all that there is to learn.

Thankfulness is recognizing the gifts around us, and within us, and being grateful for them. We all know there are many reasons to be thankful. As children grow and begin to explore, we can assist the development of thankfulness in their lives through their discoveries.

- Being thankful for our bodies. Children learn to appreciate the complexity of their bodies, and how each part is unique and essential to the functioning of the whole, in their early school days. We can show our thankfulness for our bodies by taking care to eat well, and exercising regularly (such as walking sometimes instead of regularly taking a car).
- Being thankful for our minds. The gift of intellect is apparent in so many things the children discover. A well crafted piece of music, a story, or interesting building designs; these are all products of the mind’s work. We can show our thankfulness for this gift by keeping our thoughts pure, and using our mind to create things that will contribute to the betterment of the world.

- Being thankful for our family and friends. We all appreciate the gift of friendship and family in our lives. Whether young or old, a thoughtful card of thanks, or an act of kindness to let someone know how much we value them, helps keep our relationships strong and builds unity in our community. When we discover the unique talents each of our friends and family have, we realize how enriched our own lives become. We can cultivate thankfulness for the unique talents each person brings to the table by generously sharing our own interests and talents with others as well.
- Being thankful for the earth and all living beings. Children learn that the earth is a living, breathing organism, and that our lives and well-being depend on it. We can practice thankfulness for the earth's gifts by being respectful of its resources and contributing to a sustainable lifestyle. We recognize that just like we depend on the earth for food and water, future generations depend on us to keep the earth clean.

Being thankful during difficulties is an especially helpful way to create contentment in our lives. It can bring a sense of calm and focus when things don't go our way, even though we may not understand why. When we try to see opportunity in a difficult situation, we are being thankful for what we can learn. A new discovery may be at hand, and we may find that we can develop a new virtue as a result of the problem we may be facing.

Let's make a commitment to face a new day of discovery with thankfulness in our hearts.

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