



## University of Dayton

# ECHO: Empowering Children with Hope and Opportunity

**Thankful**  
**STILL**  
(EVEN IN 2020)



There's no doubt that 2020 has been a different, if not a difficult, year! We've experienced a pandemic, racial injustices, community division and a new definition of what is "normal." The holidays are often a time of stress and heightened grief for many people. This year will be no different, maybe even more difficult. So, how can we be thankful and show gratitude in this climate? And, why should we?!

Gratitude is a way for people to appreciate what they have instead of always reaching for something new in the hopes it will make them happier, or thinking they can't feel satisfied until every physical and material need is met. Gratitude helps people refocus on what they have instead of what they lack. And, although it may feel contrived at first, this mental state grows stronger with use and practice.

Scientifically proven benefits of a gratitude mindset:

- **Expressing gratitude can improve your mood.** People who regularly express gratitude for the positive things in their life are shown to be happier overall, leading to lower rates of stress and depression.
- **Showing gratitude can make you more optimistic.** Studies show that those who express gratitude regularly appear to have a more positive outlook on life.
- **Sharing gratitude can improve social bonds.** People have reported feeling more loved and more connected to others in their lives when they routinely practice gratitude or those around them practice gratitude.
- **Practicing gratitude can improve your physical health.** People who actively express gratitude tend to be more engaged in activities to take care of their physical health, like eating well and exercising. This leads to higher energy levels, better sleep and a stronger immune system, or the ability to fight off illness or infection. People who practice gratitude report less aches and pains!
- **Gratitude improves psychological health.** Multiple studies on the link between gratitude and well-being confirm that gratitude effectively increases happiness and reduces depression.
- **Gratitude enhances empathy and reduces aggression.** Studies suggest that individuals who practice gratitude are less likely to retaliate against others, even when given negative feedback. They experienced more sensitivity and empathy toward other people and a decreased desire to seek revenge.
- **Grateful people sleep better.**
- **Gratitude improves self-esteem.** Studies have shown that gratitude reduces the need to compare yourself to others. Rather than becoming resentful toward people who seem to have more—a major factor in reduced self-esteem—grateful people are able to appreciate what they have as well as other people's accomplishments.
- **Gratitude increases mental strength.** For years, research has shown gratitude not only reduces stress, but it may also play a major role in overcoming trauma. Recognizing all that you have to be thankful for—even during the worst times—fosters resilience

### ECHO STAFF

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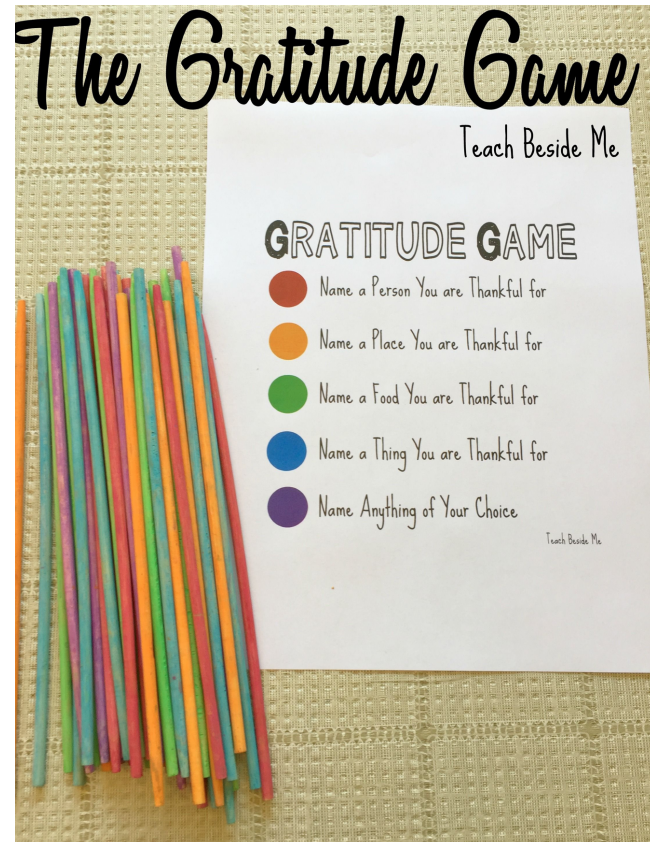
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## Making Gratitude an Everyday Habit

Again, gratitude helps people refocus on what they have instead of what they lack. And, although it may feel contrived at first, this mental state grows stronger with use and practice. Here are some simple ways to make gratitude a part of everyday:

- Keep a gratitude journal and add to it everyday.
- Tell someone you love them and how much you appreciate them.
- Stop to notice the beauty in nature each day.
- Nurture the friendships you have, good friends don't come along every day.
- Smile more often.
- Watch inspiring videos that will remind you of the good in the world.
- Include an act of kindness in your life each day.
- Avoid negative media and movies with destructive content.
- Call your mom or dad more often.
- Cook meals with love, think of the people you will feed.
- Volunteer for organizations that help others.
- Don't gossip or speak badly about anyone.
- Spend quality time with your kids, or your partner.
- Write a card to someone you haven't seen in a while and tell them something nice.
- Commit to one day a week when you won't complain about anything.
- Try to take note when people do a good job and give recognition when it's due at work.
- Thank the people who serve you in the community – the shopkeeper, the bus drivers, etc.
- Say thank you for the little things your loved ones do for you, that you normally take for granted.
- Post quotes and images that remind you to be grateful around your house.
- Call on an elderly neighbor and say thank you for their presence in your life.
- Embrace challenges and turn them into opportunities to grow.
- Pray for your enemies or people you dislike.
- Make gratitude a part of family life, share it with each other during meal time.
- If you enjoy social media, share gratitude each day by posting a positive comment, tweet, or video



## Fun Fall Crafts!

### GRATITUDE WREATH

Pick up some colored paper and a styrofoam wreath from the dollar store. Have your kids write down or draw what they are thankful for and pin their leaves to the wreath. You could even go on a nature hike and find real leaves to add to this project.

### THANKFUL DRY ERASE BOARD

Pick out a frame you have at home or at the dollar store. Decorate a piece of paper to fit inside the frame that says "Today I am Thankful for..." Each day write what you are thankful for on the glass with a dry erase marker.

### GRATITUDE ROCKS

Find some rocks and let your child paint, write, or draw what they are thankful for on them. For a fun activity afterwards, let your kids hide the rocks around the house and try to find each other's rocks. You can even leave them in the community for someone else to find!

## RESOURCES

### Local Food Resources:

**Dayton Foodbank** is the largest food resource in the Dayton area. Call [937-949-4096](tel:937-949-4096) for information on free food.

**Coronavirus Updates from House of Bread:** OPEN and serving lunch starting at 11 am.

Visit **Meals on Wheels** for senior meal delivery services. Must be 60+ years of age to apply.

**The Salvation Army Dayton Kroc Center Christmas Food Assistance:** Visit <https://kroc.salvationarmy.org/DaytonKroc/sschristmasfood> for application information.

**Winter Coats:** If you or your child is in need of a coat, please contact your ECHO School Counselor. The ECHO program will be receiving gently used clean coats on Friday November 13th.

**Toys for Tots:** For registration information and further information visit <https://dayton-oh.toysfortots.org/local-coordinator-sites/lco-sites/local-toy-request-single-form.aspx>.

For more resources check out: <https://www.hallhunger.org/coping-with-covid-19>

## Thanksgiving Funnies!

*What's a Turkey's Favorite Dessert?*

**Apple Gobbler!**

*Did you hear about the turkey who  
lost a fight?*

**It got the stuffing knocked out of  
him!**

*What's a pilgrim's favorite type of  
music?*

**Plymouth rock!**

