



Preschool Connection

How to teach children to be thankful in today's world

Inside this issue:

Teaching your child to be thankful	1
Teaching your child to be thankful cont.	2
Activity Sheet	3
Questionnaire	4

by Michelle Mahan

All children learn how to say "thank you," but it is learning to be thankful that makes us appreciate our circumstances and abilities. With all the commercialization facing children today, finding ways to be appreciative is very important. We can step outdoors with a child and notice things together—the sun of a new day, the scents from the garden, the bluebird passing overhead. Moments such as these describe things we can be thankful for which don't cost but a penny of time, won't be advertised, but become fond memories. And memories help give meaning to the lesson of appreciation. The following suggestions are ideas for enhancing some of the most common things to be thankful for.

Toys, toys, toys How does a parent get a child to appreciate what he already has? Remembering who gave a toy or a gift to the child provides an op-

portunity to appreciate the giver. Christine, mother of a three year-old, reminds her daughter who gave her the baby blanket she plays with by saying, "Remember who gave that pretty blanket to you?" She then goes on to tell about the friend of the family who made the special trip when she was born to deliver the hand-made blanket. Communication such as this gives more meaning to an everyday item or a play object. Things also need their own place to be put away. A child learns that no matter how much or how little he has, there is a spot for everything. Some things should be brought out only at certain times. One mother of two small children brings out special toys when she can watch or guide carefully, and she believes this encourages a caring attitude. Explaining the reasons why toys have places of their own says that care is necessary

for children's things as well as for adult things. "At our house we make presents for each other year round," says Sandi, a young full-time mother. "They bring me toys wrapped in paper they have colored." And she reciprocates. "Sometimes I just put a sandwich bag of chips, a marking pen and a few pieces of paper in a grocery bag. It delights them, and we get a feeling that whatever it is, it's great!"

Thank you cards have always been something I enjoyed making because I frequently heard how much they were enjoyed. My children like doing it too. And it gives parent and child a moment to reflect on the whys and whos of gift giving. Photos make great covers for homemade cards. Getting their interest is easy. Try, "Wasn't that nice of Aunt Selma to send you this fire engine. Shall we make a special

Have love in your
heart...
and peace
in your home!



card to say thank you? Maybe we could draw a picture of it and color it together." It becomes a joyful experience when a child wants to give for these reasons and appreciates what has been given to him.

Caring for the basics

Food. A child in the garden, taught to pick a ripe tomato or two, wash them, watch an adult peel them, cut them and then make spaghetti sauce from them, has not only learned something about appreciating where our food comes from but the fact that he or she has been a part of the process. It's a parent's enthusiasm about the care of the basics that helps a child understand and get excited about how things work. Shopping at the grocery store can be a daily experience of appreciating, especially if the family is on a tight budget. Working it out to the penny can be a real challenge, and with an active crew in the cart, talking to them about the needs at home helps their perspective. At home, conservation can be encouraged. Do this by saving half a sandwich and eating it when the child is hungry again, making the juice last by drinking water or milk in between, utilizing raw materials for baking and cooking rather than using box mixes. What's important is that there is communication with the child about why we buy what we do, how it is used, and where it comes from—its value. This awareness helps plant the seed for appreciation of food.

Clothes. "This is the shirt I picked out at the store," my four-year-old son said to some of his friends who came to visit. A child's sense of pride in what he or she wears will carry on through the years. It's not how much he has, or even if it isn't brand new, what's important is that he has learned that it belongs to him and it should be cared for. Allowing a child to help in the process of choosing clothes, washing and putting them away, teaching about warm clothes on cold days, cool clothes on warm days, gives an understanding to him that goes beyond what he looks like, even though he may know this is important too.

The self. In caring for ourselves, parents must take steady steps to give a child reasons for cleaning and brushing their teeth, their hair, caring for wounds, and developing good toilet habits. The good tasting children's vitamins can be used every day to remind our children that we care for ourselves by doing good things—and proceeding to talk about what the good

things are.

Seeing our family members as they are. Many times the parent who works all day comes home to feel forgotten and neglected. It may take some extra time to take a child "where I go to work to see what I do," but it will help a child appreciate a parent's efforts. Statements like, "The work I do here helps so we can live where we do and ... eat ice cream cones!" are obvious reminders in their understanding. Aside from the nuclear family, distant and extended family members can also be appreciated. Learning how we are connected by family is fascinating to most children. Stories about grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, even brothers and sisters take on great meaning to a child who hears them often enough to remember them. There are many other ways to appreciate all of our family members. It is in remembering them frequently in our conversations, and sharing time with them as much as possible that help a child in his or her memories of each individual member. Taking your child by the hand for a brief walk with all your attention on the experience can mean so much in helping your child appreciate what you want him or her to appreciate. Whether a child can enjoy each day of the year and be thankful for whatever comes his or her way depends on the way he or she has been taught to experience each day. Developing the habit of appreciating the things in one's life can bring strength and encouragement in the face of obstacles. Many successful people have been known to say, "We didn't have much but we had love." What they are saying in most cases is that they learned how to appreciate their own circumstances and abilities, and that if there isn't a bed of roses then daisies will do just fine.

Michelle Mahan is a free-lance writer, mother of two, and researches and writes about the importance of developing good habits at an early age. Reprinted with permission from *Growing Child*.

We have made a different format for this month's activities. We have decided to share with you some "Maxims to live by" taken from an article of the same name by Victor M. Parachin. Reprinted with permission of Growing Parent. We wish you all a happy holiday season!

Attitude of Gratitude:

The attitude of gratitude is vital to living. This wisdom is demonstrated through Helen Keller who was blinded and deafened while a child but went on to graduate from university and become a world renowned author and inspirational speaker: "So much has been given to me. I have no time to ponder over that which has been denied.

The best way to greet life and face life, especially when there is difficulty is to do so with joy and gratitude.

As you deal with the many events and issues of life, remind yourself that those who wish to sing always find a song. The world is filled with two types of people. Those who take things for granted and those who take them with gratitude.

Never Give Up

During World War II, England's Prime Minister, Winston Churchill was invited to give an address at the Harrow School.

His brief speech to the young people included this eloquent exhortation: "Never give in, never give in, never, never, never—in nothing, great or small, large or petty—never give in except to convictions of honor and good sense."

Life is replete with people who began with great enthusiasm and energy but lacked the perseverance to continue on when they encountered resistance. Their places are

Attitude counts more than talent

Here are some words worth thinking about. They are written by author and minister Charles Swindoll: "Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do... The remarkable thing is that we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. . . I am convinced that life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent how I react to it. And so it is with you. We are in charge of our attitudes."

Your life will be greatly determined by the attitude you choose: winner or loser, victor or victim, friendly or friend-

There is a solution to every problem:

To be human is to experience troubles; to be human is to encounter problems; to be human is to meet difficulties. That's one reality.

The flip side of the coin is this: There is a solution to every problem. Then faced with a mountain of problems, look at it, study it, think about it, and you will find a way to climb over it, discover a pass through or dig a tunnel underneath.

Serve others:

Dedicate some of your life for others.

Theodore Roosevelt urge people to "do what you can, with what you have, where you are."

John Wesley, who in the 18th century founded what we know as the Methodist Church, devoted his life to helping others. In a few brief sentences, he clearly outlines what it means to be of service:

Do all the good you can. By all the means you can.

In all the ways you can. In all the places you can. At all the times you can. As long as ever you can.

Bring sunshine into darkened lives

Writer Marion Gaines tells the story of a woman volunteer at a telephone hotline for shut-ins. Part of the volunteer's task included checking on people who needed a little extra care because of financial or health reasons.

One of her "regulars" was an elderly woman living alone on a fixed income. Through the conversations, the volunteer learned this woman desperately needed a new overcoat. Her limited finances meant she had to rely on an increasingly threadbare old coat.

Wanting to help, the volunteer withdrew \$200 from her bank account and sent it to the woman with an anonymous note reading: "For a new coat." The next time she called, the elderly woman excitedly shared her good news.

When the volunteer asked "Did you get a new coat?" the elderly woman replied: "Yes, but I found one for \$150.

"You've been so nice to me, I'm sending you the extra \$50 so the hotline center can help others."

Always remember that those who bring sunshine into the darkened

Please take a moment each month to fill out the brief questionnaire that we have included. We would like to know how helpful (or not) these newsletters have been for you, and how we can improve them for future years.

Please complete and return to your preschool teacher.

December 2006 Newsletter

The information in this newsletter was (check one):

Informative. The right amount of information

Too brief

Too long

Not helpful

Other: _____

The activities were:

Helpful Activities you liked best (which numbers) _____

Not useful Activities you like least _____

The right amount of activities?

Comments: _____
