

November 2020 — The Power of Gratitude

Dear Parents,

We're thinking of you. How you are feeling these days?

Have you been feeling grumpy? Tired and irritated? Tense, anxious?

If you've been feeling any of these feelings, you are not alone.

A [recent survey](#) from the American Psychological Association says that COVID-19 is taking a much bigger emotional toll on adults who are caring for children than on adults without children. While 70 percent of *all* working adults say their jobs are causing significant stress right now, 71 percent of those playing parental roles are *also* stressed over managing their children's at-home learning.

Even when we're doing our best to prevent stress—getting rest, exercise, healthy food, outdoor time, meditation—we will feel stretched and stressed at times, and some days are just hard no matter what we do. On those days especially, we need a quick re-set to relax our minds and re-connect our hearts with beauty and goodness.

There are many ways to re-set. You've probably tried taking a few slow stretches, a few deep breaths, or giving yourself a dose of self-empathy. Each of these strategies begins with noticing: once we notice stress, we can activate our power to shift energy. And one of the most powerful ways to shift our energy is gratitude.

Gratitude is the quickest way we know to shift energy and get from disgruntled to calm-alert.

Marshall Rosenberg spoke often of the power of gratitude. He kept a gratitude journal by his bed, and at the end of each day, he would write at least one thing he was grateful for, and draw a little flower by it. He said that this practice kept him going in the face of difficult work and the painful news of the day.

“If the only prayer you said was thank you, that would be enough.”

— *Meister Eckhart*

Feeling and expressing gratitude is not about ignoring problems or sugar-coating hardships. Instead, gratitude is a simple practice that allows us to feel our dismay, disappointment, discouragement—and not stay stuck. It takes just a moment to stop, take a breath, bring to mind something you are genuinely grateful for, and say “thank you.” Just a moment to feel gratitude in your heart. Here are a few tips for practicing.

Personal Practice

1. NOTICE when you are stuck in feelings of irritation or discouragement ... and notice the stories in your head that accompany these feelings.
2. STOP. Take a time *in* for yourself.
3. NOTICE your breath ... notice it slowing down.
4. SHIFT your focus to something you're genuinely grateful for.
5. NOTICE how you feel when you bring this to mind.
6. TAKE a few more breaths, breathing into your heart this feeling of appreciation.

Family Activities

A practice of sharing appreciation aloud during weekly family meetings will nourish heart-felt connections and increase feelings of awe and appreciation for Life's many gifts. Here are a few more ways to practice gratitude and appreciation throughout your family's days and weeks together.

GRATITUDE JOURNALS

Encourage family members to keep gratitude journals. A gratitude journal is a place to write and draw people and things you are grateful for. You can be grateful for anything you notice: in nature (the beauty of flowers, birds, the sound of the wind) ... in family interactions (things you do for each other that enrich life) ... within yourself (your learning, your contribution to the household) ... and more.

GIRAFFE APPRECIATIONS

A Giraffe Appreciation is a written note of gratitude. We introduced this idea in our books *Respectful Parents*, *Respectful Kids* and *The Compassionate Classroom*, along with a form that contains prompts to help people express appreciation/gratitude for something someone did that enriched their life. This is what a Giraffe Appreciation looks like:

When ...

I felt/feel ...

Because my needs were met for ...

You can copy blank Giraffe Appreciation forms from our books, or make your own form. Keep the blank notes handy for family members to fill in at any time, give to someone directly, or post on a family bulletin board or on the fridge.

May these reminders of the power of gratitude nourish your hearts.

Wishing you and your family well, in all ways.

— Victoria & Sura

“It’s a funny thing about life, once you begin to take note of the things you are grateful for, you begin to lose sight of the things that you lack.”

—*Germany Kent*

Explore more support materials for your tool chest:

- [*Respectful Parents, Respectful Kids: 7 Keys to Turn Family Conflict Into Co-operation*](#)
- [The No-Fault Zone® Game](#)
- Free downloadable [Feelings & Needs Cards](#) in English and 20 other languages
- Contact us for parent coaching and consultations:
 - Victoria@thenofaultzone.com
 - Sura@thenofaultzone.com