



EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH CONNECTION

MOVING LIVES FORWARD

TEACHING GRATITUDE

"What do you think of when you hear the word GRATITUDE?"

What do you think of when you hear the word "Gratitude"? Do think of how you're more aware of this around certain holidays, like Christmas or Thanksgiving? Or, do you think of how thankful you are for the people and things around you? Let's be honest for a second...thinking about gratitude doesn't come naturally for many of us and it's not something we focus on all of the time. Thinking about gratitude and actually feeling it can be two completely different things. On top of that, explaining gratitude and teaching others about it can seem even more difficult...especially when it comes to our children. How can we teach children about this when it's hard for us to feel gratitude ourselves?

A good place to start is defining what gratitude means-Gratitude is feeling thankful, feeling ready to show kindness and appreciation. This can look a little different as we teach our children about gratitude and how to apply it in everyday situations. For example, it's hard to make children feel gratitude, so maybe focus on some kindness and how they can practice this around their family and peers at school. Another example is going beyond the typical "please" and "thank you"- modeling for children why you are saying thank you. Below are some other ideas and ways to start teaching your children about gratitude and how you can practice together!

Noticing – Start by becoming aware of a person, place or thing you want to appreciate. (Children might be grateful for ice cream, a stuffed toy or a favorite cartoon-it's a good place to start!)

Thinking – Start thinking about why you've been given these things. What are all the reasons why you are thankful for this person or thing? Why do you think they did something nice for you? Did you do anything to deserve their kindness? Does this mean something to you? Is it fun? Exciting? Why do you love it?

Feeling – The emotions you experience as a result of the things you've been given. When you think about these

special things or people how do you feel? Happy, silly, excited, calm, peaceful or proud?

Doing – The way you express appreciation. What can you do to express your gratitude for this person, place or thing? Think action.

https://www.mindfulmazing.com/the-best-gratitude-activities-for-kids/#How_to_Teach_Gratitude_to_Kids

- Give Compliments- Model ways to give positive encouragement and praise throughout the day.
- Share things with others
- Help someone in need- Help an older neighbor or relative
- Pick up garbage around the neighborhood-See how much you can pick up around the house or local park.
- Visit a friend in need
- Donate things from around the house, or donate to a local food/toy drive
- Volunteer
- Keep a gratitude journal or picture wall- write down things together that you are thankful for, or cut out pictures of things you are thankful for and put them on a thankful poster.

Websites with other ideas about Gratitude:

https://www.mindfulmazing.com/the-best-gratitude-activities-for-kids/#How_to_Teach_Gratitude_to_Kids

<https://www.verywellmind.com/how-to-teach-children-gratitude-4782154>

<https://www.parents.com/toddlers-preschoolers/development/behavioral/teaching-children-to-be-grateful/>

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/what_parents_neglect_to_teach_about_gratitude

Cheryl's Corner of Caring

It takes a big heart to teach skills to little minds.