A Center for Developmental Science
Inter-Institutional Collaboration

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Learning and the Brain
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Why children’s gratitude?
The Gratitude Questionnaire–6

Using the scale below as a guide, rate how much you agree with each item.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. I have so much in life to be thankful for.
2. If I had to list everything that I felt grateful for, it would be a very long list.
3. When I look at the world, I don’t see much to be grateful for.
4. I am grateful to a wide variety of people.
5. As I get older I find myself more able to appreciate the people, events, and situations that have been part of my life.
6. Long amounts of time can go by before I feel grateful to something or someone.
What is gratitude?

“..the appreciation experienced by individuals when somebody does something kind or helpful for them” (Froh et al., 2011)

“..[gratitude] flows from the perception that one has benefited from the costly, intentional, voluntary action of another person.” (McCullough, Kimeldorf & Cohen 2008)
What is gratitude?

- Saying Thank You
- Self-report surveys
- Gratitude Vignettes
What parents say

Findings from six focus groups with parents of 1st-3rd graders from fairly privileged families.
How Parents Describe Children’s Gratitude
Definition of Gratitude

A set of emotions, thoughts and actions. These include a **sense of happiness, joy, or appreciation** due to the **appraisal** of having received something not from one’s own efforts but which is **intentionally and freely given** as well as behaviors that **express appreciation**.
Gratitude as a Process

- Awareness
- Attributions
- Positive Affect
- Behavior

Initial Step
Meaning Making
Expression

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Using the scale below as a guide, rate how much you agree with each item.

1. My child used good manners WITHOUT being prompted after being given something (i.e., say please, thank you).
2. My child acknowledged or recognized that they received something on their own WITHOUT my prompting.
3. My child recognized the effort or thoughtfulness behind a gift or object they received from others.
4. My child expressed their positive feelings when they received something special.
5. My child talked about why someone gave them something special or why they received something unexpected.
6. My child expressed gratitude toward others through ways that went beyond good manners.
Raising Grateful Children Project

- Awareness
- Attributions
- Positive Affect
- Behavior

Initial Step
Meaning Making
Expression

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101 parents (mostly mothers) and 6-9 year old children.
Parents’ Daily Reports of Children’s Gratitude

My child....

- **Awareness:** “recognized the effort or thoughtfulness behind a gift”

- **Attributions:** “talked about why they received something unexpected”

- **Positive Affect:** “expressed their positive feelings when they received something”

- **Behaviors:** “expressed gratitude toward others through ways that went beyond good manners”
How do children experience gratitude?

Children show “good manners” more often than other forms of gratitude.
Within the gratitude process, children are least likely to make gratitude-enhancing attributions about gifts received.
How do parents foster gratitude?

Modeling
How do grateful parents foster gratitude?

Niche Selection
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Choices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The extent to which parent selects or encourage child to select activities that do things like:</td>
<td>Have you selected activities like those listed below for your child with at least part of the goal being to develop a stronger sense of gratitude:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teach your child to express gratitude</td>
<td>• Taking your child on walks or hikes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Expose your child to groups who are less fortunate</td>
<td>• Setting up dinners or social events with other families who show gratitude often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teach your child to be reflective so your child can better appreciate what is around them</td>
<td>• Participate in community service projects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is niche selection?

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Does niche selection work?

- Parent Gratitude
- Having Niche Selection Goals
- Making Niche Selection Choices
- Child Gratitude

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How do parents foster gratitude?

Reminiscing
How do parents foster gratitude?

Responding to Lost Opportunities
How do parents foster gratitude?

Daily Reminders
Parents’ Daily Reminders

How often have you...

• **Awareness**: “Pointed out to my child that they have received something special”

• **Attributions**: “Asked my child to think about why someone gave them something special or why they received something”

• **Positive Affect**: “Asked my child about their feelings when they received something special”

• **Behavior**: “Prompted my child to show gratitude in ways beyond good manners”

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Parents spend more time reinforcing “good manners” than any other form of daily reminder.
Comparing one family to another.....

Parents who give more reminders

Children who display greater gratitude
Comparing one day to another within a family.....

Parents give more reminders than usual.

On days when children show less gratitude than usual.
Scaffolding gratitude in children day-by-day....

- Drops in children’s gratitude
- Increases in parent’s reminders
- Encouraging gratitude in children over time

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How do parents foster gratitude?

1. By thinking about gratitude in children as a process.
2. By modeling gratitude for your children.
3. By having the goal of picking activities and experiences for your children that foster gratitude – and following through with the activities you choose together!
4. By supporting your child in remembering to engage in the gratitude process when they need it most.

Follow our work at:

http://hussong.web.unc.edu/drrl/drrl/rgc/
With Gratitude....