



10-14 YEAR-OLDS

SUNNY
IDEAS
FOR A
RAINY
DAY 3

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Recognize -> Acknowledge -> Appreciate = Gratitude

Have you been reading about the rising field of Positive Psychology? The study of ordinary human assets, Positive Psychology is concerned with building strengths rather than focusing on deficits; something, as parents, you are already inclined to do – loving your children as you do.

Recent research from Positive Psychology has shown that fostering *gratitude* benefits children, particularly in the middle and teen years when they are developmentally capable of understanding the concept. Children who feel and express gratitude are more likely to engage in prosocial¹ behavior and to have a greater sense of wellbeing. Adults who feel and express gratitude are more likely to enjoy their work, be optimistic, exhibit energy to pursue their goals and are more inclined to help others. Not bad.

When thinking about helping your child expand his capacity for gratitude, bear in mind that nobody wants to be told to be grateful. Not only does it feel awful to manufacture the feeling, children might think that gratitude “should” feel a certain way or that if they don’t feel it that way, they are bad.

Dr. Robert Emmons states that gratitude is a three-stage process starting with recognizing that someone has done something for you (intellect), acknowledging that they did it willingly, and then appreciating it (emotion/feeling).

As a young person, I mistakenly thought that gratitude had to come from feeling undeserving. I misunderstood the difference between humility and unworthiness, so I resisted feeling gratitude. It wasn’t until much later in life that I discovered the benefits of appreciation and gratitude.

You are probably much better at this than I was. Whether you are or not, the activities here just might be life changing for both you and your child.

Enjoy!

Judy

P.S. Each activity includes at least one aspect of the three stages of gratitude, so use them as you see fit.

1. Voluntary behavior intended to benefit another.

How To Use These Books

There are *Sunny Ideas for a Rainy Day* for each of these age groups: 2 - 6, 6 -10, 10 -14. AND, there are multiple installments so that you can add to the activities you already have. This is *Sunny Ideas for a Rainy Day 3*.

What will you get?

- ♥ A few general developmental attributes of a typically developing child for each age year
- 2 activities per age (feel free to mix and match)
- Instructions for each activity and a list of materials (supplies are easy to find)
- A parent key for:
 - Prep/set up time (1- 4 clocks) 
 - Messy /clean up (1-4 sponges) 
 - Level of supervision (green, yellow, red)   
 - Why do this activity (besides fun, of course) ?
 - Ideas for extending or adding on +
- Templates for activities when needed
- A list of resources for further reading

Ten - Eleven

- ♥ Love factual information and collecting it.
- ♥ Good at memorizing.
- ♥ Can think about and enjoy organizing-type principles like classification.
- ♥ Generally content.
- ♥ Bodies growing rapidly – need frequent breaks and snacks.
- ♥ Some will have begun puberty.
- ♥ Social groupings, popularity and social hierarchy take on importance.
- ♥ Cooperative, inclined to problem solving and mediation.
- ♥ Greater understanding of others' feelings and intentions.
- ♥ Can follow multiple storylines at once.
- ♥ Enjoys group bonding experiences and working with younger children.



Activity: Gratitude Lightning Round

You'll need: Nothing!

What to do:

1. Introduce this game at dinner, or another time where two or more people are gathered.
2. One person starts by naming something he feels happy he has in his life; something appreciated. (Get silly, silly is good.)

3. The person to the left has exactly 3 seconds to come up with something that hasn't been said before. It's okay to say "my new sandals" if someone else has already said "my shoes."
4. If they can't come up with something or they repeat, they have to sit down for one round, and can come in again.
5. The person who didn't have to sit down at all – wins!

? This activity improves the skill of finding things to be grateful for everywhere we look.

+ This is a fun one to do at large gatherings.

Eleven - Twelve

- ♥ Curiosity about and ability to identify with other cultures and time periods.
- ♥ Can grasp abstract concepts – including abstract humor.
- ♥ Body changes (some are in puberty) = body consciousness and strong confusing emotions.
- ♥ Focused on peers and what everyone else is doing – uses phone, texting, etc., to keep up.
- ♥ Dramatic and can appreciate complex social situations.
- ♥ Emphasis on physical appearance, including clothing.
- ♥ Can think about moral and ethical questions and confront issues of loss, separation, and exclusion.
- ♥ Challenges, argues, tests limits.
- ♥ Can be impulsive.
- ♥ Looks to learn new skills. Refine and practice old ones – not so much.
- ♥ Needs a good deal of physical activity, sleep, and breaks to recharge and de-stress.
- ♥ Likes to imagine self in adult roles.



Activity: The S.M.A.K. Box
Small Meaningful Acts of Kindness

You are making a box for either the whole family to use, or one to be used just between you and your child. In it you'll place notes for small things you'd like from the other. Each request will begin with the phrase, "Thank you for" and finish with your small request, e.g., thank you, dad, for making spaghetti dinner, or, thank you, (your child's name), for encouraging your brother at his soccer game.

You'll need:

1. A shoe box-size box
2. Slips of paper
3. Any art supplies you'd like to use to decorate the box
4. Photos of you and your child or family photos
5. Glue
6. Scissors

What to do:

1. Explain the idea of the box and use the family photos and art supplies to decorate the box.
2. Write "Thank you for " on slips of paper.
3. Start off by putting 3 wishes/asks each in the box (add more as the week goes on). Don't be alarmed if your child asks for "things" at first. Gently encourage her to make one out of the three "asks" something you can't buy. Model asking for deeds and/or words of encouragement.

4. Decide on a time (once per week) when you will go over, together, which wishes were granted. Acknowledge the person who granted it. Leave those wishes that haven't been granted yet, in the box.
5. When your wishes are granted, make sure to acknowledge it specifically and verbalize how good it feels and your appreciation.

? This activity is about giving and taking and is primarily social and emotional learning. For more information on gratitude, look on page 2 or in Resources on page 12.

+ Encourage your child to draw or find images for decorating the box that represent how it feels when someone does something for him, or when someone says thank you for something he did or said.

Twelve - Thirteen

- ♥ Body changes (some are in puberty) = body consciousness and strong confusing emotions.
- ♥ Very energetic + growth spurts = need to eat frequently.
- ♥ Cares deeply about peer opinions, grapples with decisions and defines ethical behavior for self.
- ♥ Uses a good deal of slang.
- ♥ Admires older teens.
- ♥ Self critical, especially of appearance.
- ♥ Can reason hypothetically.
- ♥ Moody.
- ♥ Can understand multiple perspectives, and sides to an argument.



Activity: Spy in the Kitchen Part 1



You'll need:

1. A copy of the movie *Pressure Cooker**
2. Writing materials

What to do:

1. Watch the movie together. It's a powerful story about what it takes to make dreams come true. The first step of, course, is being willing to dream, the second putting in the effort. It's worth watching and discussing, even if you do no other part of this activity.
2. Discuss these questions with your child:
 - Did you see the students and/or the teacher do something for another person in their class "on purpose?" What?
 - What about in their homes?
 - Did that person give up anything to do those things (hint: like time, money, status, friendship)?
 - If you were the teacher, would you have handled the class differently? How?
 - What did the students do for the teacher that she may not have noticed?
 - What did the teacher do for her students that they might not have noticed?

- Which students seem to appreciate what others give to them and do for them? How can you tell?
3. Pretend you are a character in the movie and write a note to another character acknowledging what he or she did for you.

* For information on the movie click [here](#). *Pressure Cooker* is available at some libraries.

? This activity develops recognition of intentional obvious, and not so obvious, giving, which develops social/emotional skills.

? Your child will be using creative writing skills like perspective, and practicing the mechanics of letter writing.

Thirteen - Fourteen

- ♥ Looks for explanations of how things work, why things happen the way they do. Issues of fairness and justice become important and interesting.
- ♥ Complains about aches and pains.
- ♥ Can be critical of self and others, anxious and easily worried.
- ♥ Wants to “make deals” with adults and peers.
- ♥ Can manage two concepts simultaneously.
- ♥ Keeping it light, laughing and good-natured humor go a long way.



Activity: Spy in the Kitchen Part 2



You'll need:

1. A copy of the movie *Pressure Cooker**
2. Camera or phone with camera
3. Writing supplies or notebook

What to do:

1. At the very least, watch *Pressure Cooker*. It also would be terrific if you have already done Part 1.
2. Ask your child to be a Kitchen Secret Agent – feel free to change this to any area of your home.
3. Your child’s job is to secretly catch people in your family “in the act” of intentionally doing something for another person, or giving them something, while in the kitchen. Examples: getting up to get a drink for another person; taking out the garbage unasked; playing with a sibling; making lunch for someone else, etc.
4. And, then to document this in photos and/or writing.
5. Decide on a time that your child will “report” what she uncovered to the family.
6. Make sure you model the act of verbally acknowledging something given to you and appreciating it.

* For information on the movie click [here](#). *Pressure Cooker* is available at some libraries.

? The more practice your child has with identifying when and how others give, intentionally, to each other, the better.

+ Rotate who gets to be the secret agent (so your teen gets to be acknowledged too).

+ Rotate which area gets spied on.

- + Make a gift of the photos/ observations to a family member.
- + Make a mural or collage after you've got writing and/or photos of several areas. Where does the most giving take place?

RESOURCES

(For more see *Sunny Ideas for a Rainy Day 10-14 Volumes 1 & 2*)

Websites on Positive Psychology and Gratitude

<http://www.positivelypositive.com/>

<http://www.sfgate.com/health/article/Berkeley-center-funds-gratitude-research-4091181.php> Research being done on gratitude

Books on Gratitude

[*The How of Happiness*](#). By S. Lyumobirsky

[*The Psychology of Gratitude*](#) By Robert A. Emmons

[*Thanks! How the New Science of Gratitude Can Make You Happier*](#). By R. A. Emmons

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Judy