



SEE THE GOOD CHALLENGE

"The discipline of gratitude is the explicit effort to acknowledge that all I am and have is given to me as a gift of love, a gift to be celebrated with joy."

— Henri J.M. Nouwen

OVERVIEW

Students define and practice gratitude, followed by a discussion on the costs and benefits involved when someone does something for you. (Gratitude for Tweens & Teens – Lesson 2)

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- Anytime during the year

TIME REQUIRED

- 1 class period

LEVEL

- Middle School
- High School

MATERIALS

- [Lesson 2 PowerPoint slideshow](#)
- Computer and monitor or projector to show video(s): "[Nature, Beauty, and Gratitude](#)", "[Gift of the Magi](#)" (optional), "[Gratitude Experiment](#)", "[Gratitude as a Life Skill -- Go Strengths!](#)" (optional)
- [Gratitude Challenge and Journal handout](#) for each student
- Optional: [Gift of the Magi handout](#) for each student and [Gift of the Magi discussion questions](#) for the teacher

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Define gratitude and why it's important
- Understand the costs of kindness and the benefits of receiving it

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Awareness
- Social Awareness
- Responsible Decision-Making

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

Keep a gratitude journal for a week, recording twice a week at least three things or people for whom you are grateful.

At least once, consider the cost to someone who did something for you and how their action benefited you. How does keeping a gratitude journal make you feel?

INSTRUCTIONS

Notes:

- This lesson is part of a [series on gratitude](#); however, this lesson can be done on its own as an introductory lesson on gratitude or kindness.
- The instructions below refer to the slides in the [Lesson 2 PowerPoint slideshow](#).

SLIDE 1 – INTRODUCE THE LESSON

- Introduce the lesson.
 - *Today we're going to talk about what gratitude is. Can anyone tell me what gratitude is?*

SLIDE 2 – DEFINITION OF GRATITUDE

- After several students offer their definitions of gratitude, offer them this definition.
 - *Gratitude is the ability to recognize and acknowledge the good things, people, and places in our lives.*
 - *For example, if your friend goes out of their way to do you a favor, you would probably feel grateful towards them.*

- *Now I know you've heard of this before, but what you might not know is that it can have enormous implications for your physical and mental health.*

SLIDE 3 – GRATITUDE VIDEO

- Have students watch this video "[Nature, Beauty, and Gratitude](#)" (9:47 minutes).
- For a shorter version of the video, start at 3:31.
- Please note: In the longer version of the video, there is a brief moment of nudity (:29 to :32).

SLIDE 4 – WHY GRATITUDE IS GOOD

- After watching the videos, share with students what science has discovered about why gratitude is good for us.
 - *There have been many studies on the effects of gratitude, and they confirm a few main effects.*
 - *First, gratitude is a positive emotion, so it feels good to be grateful. Positive emotions like gratitude can also make you feel more open, creative, and energized.*
 - *Second, feeling grateful has been linked to physical health outcomes such as lower blood pressure and stronger immune system functioning.*
 - *Next, because gratitude involves recognizing other people for their kindness, feeling and expressing gratitude can help strengthen relationships.*
 - *And, because of all these factors, people who feel and express gratitude more often to feel happier overall.*

SLIDE 5 – GRATITUDE WARMUP

- In pairs, have students take about one minute to list three things they're grateful for.
 - *You can be grateful for big things, like having supportive parents, or small things, like being able to say "hi" to your friend before class started.*
- After a minute, ask for volunteers to share what they were grateful for.
 - *Gratitude seems pretty simple, right? Let's take a closer look at when we feel gratitude...*

SLIDE 6 – WHEN SHOULD YOU FEEL GRATEFUL?

- Discuss with students three things to consider when someone does something kind for you.
 - *First, did the person do it on purpose? There's a big difference between someone doing something to help you for selfish reasons (like needing a favor later) vs. for selfless reasons (like deciding ahead of time to do something helpful just for you).*
 - *Second, did that person's help benefit you? Think about it: For someone to help you, that person has to really think about what you need or want. You wouldn't be super grateful if someone brought you a tissue when you didn't need one.*
 - *And finally, what did that act cost the other person? We often think of costs in terms of money, but it also includes people's time and effort. For instance, if your mom gives you a ride to the mall, she not only spends money on gas, but also spends her time, which she could use to do something more fun for her.*

- *Altogether, we may feel particularly grateful towards someone who sacrifices their own time, money, or effort to do something on purpose that benefits us.*
- *Now we're going to watch a video to demonstrate what we've been talking about.*

SLIDE 7 – WHEN SHOULD YOU FEEL GRATEFUL?

- Have students watch Sesame Street's [Gift of the Magi](#) (9:25) OR [read the story](#).
- After the video, discuss how it's appropriate to feel grateful to people when it COSTS them to give you something and it's VALUABLE to you. (Optional: Use the [list of questions](#) to discuss O'Henry's The Gift of the Magi.)
- Introduce the [GRATITUDE CHALLENGE](#), letting them know that their homework for the week is to write in their gratitude journals at least four times about specific people and things for which they feel grateful.
- Watch this "[Gratitude Experiment](#)" video to introduce the gratitude journal. (2:24)
- If there are students skeptical about gratitude journaling, watch this "[Gratitude as a Life Skill -- Go Strengths!](#)" video (2:04)

CLOSURE

- Ask students to reflect either verbally or in written form about something that they discovered about gratitude or that surprised them from this lesson.

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

Do you notice whether students are more actively practicing gratitude after this practice?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

Research has found that teens who had [high levels of gratitude](#) when entering high school had less negative emotions and depression and more positive emotions, life satisfaction, and happiness four years later when they were finishing high school. They also had more hope and a stronger sense of meaning in life.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

School is preparation for life. Thus, students who have a greater sense of well-being are on track for becoming well-adjusted adults. In addition, both hope and feeling like your life makes sense and matters—or a sense of meaning in life—may encourage students to [use their lives](#) to contribute to the betterment of society. Indeed, one study found that teens with a strong sense of purpose also had a sense of gratitude for [being able to give back](#).

SOURCE

Thanks! A Strengths-Based Gratitude Curriculum for Tweens and Teens developed by Dr. Giacomo Bono and Yvonne Huffaker, in partnership with the Greater Good Science Center and the John Templeton Foundation. Slide design by Susan Mangan and Rachel Baumsteiger.

For the entire curriculum, click [here](#).