

Practising gratitude in early years

Research shows that people who practice gratitude on a regular basis have higher levels of emotional well-being, physical health and are generally happier.

Practising gratitude simply means declaring the things that we are grateful for. By supporting children to practise gratitude on a regular basis, you can increase children's optimism, social and emotional development, and general sense of belonging.

Use our top tips to support the children and team in your setting to practise regular gratitude, spreading love and happiness!

Top tips

1. **Talk to the children about what being grateful means:**

Children have an amazing ability to see the good in people and things. There's no doubt they will be able to think of lots of things that make them happy and that they are glad about

2. **Model gratitude:**

This could become a team practice in your setting, talking to children during group times about what you are grateful for each day, or it could be as simple as using language regarding things they are grateful for with children during play. For example, 'I had a lovely big breakfast this morning and I'm so grateful that I had time to make it. That made me feel good.'

3. **Get parents involved:**

Talk to parents about the benefits of gratitude. If you use video/recordings in your setting, could parents send you short videos of themselves saying what they're grateful for to share with the children? Seeing key adults practising gratitude can encourage children to do the same

4. **Give children time and space to talk:**

By asking open-ended questions such as 'what's been the best thing about today or your weekend?', you support them to develop their thinking and recognise the things that make them feel good

5. **It's OK to not be OK:**

If children are having a hard time thinking of something they're grateful for, that's OK! Sometimes we all struggle to see the positives and talking to children about this helps build their understanding of their emotions. Ask children what helps them to feel better when they're sad, like cuddles from a parent or their favourite television programme and point out that this could be something to be thankful for



6. **Make time in each day for gratitude:**

By making gratitude a regular practise, children will become used to thinking in this way and will start practising gratitude throughout all parts of their daily lives. The 'attitude of gratitude' will come more naturally and this is a skill they can use for the rest of their lives

7. **Create a gratitude board in your setting:**

This doesn't need to be a complicated board. It could be as simple as photos of children and sticky notes that can be updated with children's quotes on them.