



## Thanks! A Strengths-Based Gratitude Curriculum for Tweens and Teens

Four lessons to help students understand the meaning of gratitude and how to cultivate it in their everyday lives.



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# Thanks! A Strengths-Based Gratitude Curriculum for Tweens and Teens

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# Thanks! A Strengths-Based Gratitude Curriculum for Tweens and Teens

## Introduction

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Over the past two decades, studies have consistently found that people who practice gratitude report fewer symptoms of illness, including depression, more optimism and happiness, stronger relationships, more generous behavior, and many other benefits.

Further, research convincingly shows that, when compared with their less grateful peers, grateful *youth* are happier and more satisfied with their lives, friends, family, neighborhood, and selves. They also report more hope, engagement with their hobbies, higher GPAs, and less envy, depression, and materialism.

That's why the Greater Good Science Center launched the Youth Gratitude Project (YGP) as part of the broader Expanding the Science and Practice of Gratitude, a multiyear project funded by the [John Templeton Foundation](#). In addition to advancing the knowledge of how to measure and develop gratitude in children, the YGP created and tested a new gratitude curriculum for middle and high schoolers.

The main idea of the YGP curriculum is that varied gratitude practices should help students feel more socially competent and connected, be more satisfied with school, have better mental health and emotional well-being, and be more motivated about school and their future. For example, practices like journaling that genuinely build on students' strengths and guide them to have more meaningful interactions and regular discussion with peers, teachers, and other adults.

Preliminary evidence for the effects of the gratitude curriculum indicate that it is helping to decrease depression, anxiety, and antisocial behavior and increase hope, emotional regulation, and search for purpose.



# Thanks! A Strengths-Based Gratitude Curriculum for Tweens and Teens

## Introduction

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In describing the design of the gratitude curriculum, lead researcher Dr. Giacomo Bono writes:

Gratitude interventions for students should start by identifying and engaging students' character strengths and interests, and they should let students appreciate the different benefits and benefactors in their lives for themselves. Let's go beyond lists and dry journals. When people "get" us and help us through tough times, [gratitude grows](#).

Schools participating in the YGP curriculum have shared anecdotes about students' and parents' enthusiasm for the gratitude lessons. Indeed, the character strength and gratitude exercises have not only been affirmational—strengthening pride in students' achievements and building a sense of community—but, according to Dr. Bono, they have also been hijacking much of the wall space at Open Houses!

We sincerely hope that, as students begin to practice gratitude, they will begin to see the value of altruistic choices and recognize the good intentions of others, helping them to feel supported in reaching for the better.

### How To Use The Lessons

Each lesson follows a consistent format:

**Time Required:** The time required is a suggested time based on feedback from educators who have taught the lesson. For the full benefit, lessons should be taught in their entirety, which may take one or two class periods.

**Grade Level:** The lessons were designed for both middle and high school students; however, teachers should feel free to adapt the lessons to meet the needs of their students.

**Materials:** The materials listed for each activity are deliberately simple and low-cost. An internet connection and a TV or projector will be required to show the videos. Links to PDFs of handouts and PowerPoint slides are included with the curriculum.



# Thanks! A Strengths-Based Gratitude Curriculum for Tweens and Teens

## Introduction

### How To Use The Lessons (*cont'd*)

**Learning Objectives:** The learning objective describes the knowledge, skills, and/or attitudes that are developed in each activity.

**Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Competencies:** Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is the process through which children learn and apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to:

- Understand and manage emotions
- Set and achieve positive goals
- Feel and show empathy for others
- Establish and maintain positive relationships
- Make responsible decisions

Five social-emotional competencies have been identified by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) as foundational. The table on the next page lists those competencies, and ways in which gratitude practices can support their development.

SEL Competencies	How Gratitude Practices Support This Competency
<b>Self-awareness:</b> The ability to accurately recognize one's emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior. This includes accurately assessing one's strengths and limitations and possessing a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism.	Students develop a deeper awareness of their thoughts and feelings when they reflect mindfully on their experience of gratitude. Choosing to express gratitude also enhances students' confidence and optimism.
<b>Self-management:</b> The ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations. This includes managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and setting and working toward achieving personal and academic goals.	Choosing to respond with gratitude, when experiencing kindness from others, requires students to regulate their thoughts, feelings and actions.



# Thanks! A Strengths-Based Gratitude Curriculum for Tweens and Teens

## Introduction

### How To Use The Lessons (*cont'd*)

SEL Competencies ( <i>cont'd</i> )	How Gratitude Practices Support This Competency ( <i>cont'd</i> )
<p><b>Social awareness:</b> The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behavior, and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.</p>	<p>By considering the intentions and efforts of those they are grateful to, students develop social awareness. In particular, they develop the ability to take the perspective of others and to empathize with them.</p>
<p><b>Relationship skills:</b> The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed.</p>	<p>When they express gratitude, students establish and maintain healthy relationships with others. Planning and carrying out acts of kindness toward others also strengthens relationship skills.</p>
<p><b>Responsible decision making:</b> The ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others.</p>	<p>In choosing to express gratitude, students practice responsible decision-making and enhance the well-being of others, themselves and the world around them.</p>

**Getting Ready for This Activity:** This section offers simple ways a teacher might explore the activity for themselves first before teaching it to students. Indeed, research suggests that teachers who exhibit gratitude feel more satisfied, accomplished, and have more emotional reserves. Experiencing the benefits of gratitude firsthand can enhance your work with students by helping you be more in tune with how they will engage with the activities in this guide.

**How to Do It:** The process of each activity is described in detail. This can be adapted to suit the needs of the group.



# Thanks! A Strengths-Based Gratitude Curriculum for Tweens and Teens

## Introduction

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### **How To Use The Lessons (*cont'd*)**

**Reflection After the Activity:** To deepen the experience of the activity, we suggest asking students to reflect on the impact of this activity on themselves.

#### **Key themes in the gratitude lessons**

Central to the concept of gratitude are the ideas of intention, benefit, and cost or “benefit appraisals”. According to gratitude researchers Jeffrey Froh and Giacomo Bono:

- Acts of kindness that inspire gratitude are usually done on purpose, with intention. Someone has noticed us, thought about what we need, and chosen to do something to meet that need. Reflecting on the intentions behind these acts deepens our sense of gratitude.
- A related idea is that each act of kindness has a cost to the person who performs it. The cost may include time, effort or something that was given up, as well as any financial cost. When we understand those costs, we gain a deeper appreciation of the person who acted in a caring way.
- Finally, others’ acts of kindness benefit us personally in ways that may be material, emotional, and/or social. Noticing and acknowledging the ways we benefit from others’ actions enhances our gratitude.

#### **Teaching gratitude in a culturally-responsive way**

When teaching about gratitude in a school setting, it is important to keep in mind that the school community is made up of adults and children who differ in terms of culture, race, socioeconomic status, and religious background. This may mean that they also differ in the way they express and practice gratitude.

In some cultures, and contexts, verbal expressions of gratitude are common, while in others a gesture, a reciprocal act of kindness or caring, a simple or elaborate ritual, or giving a small token or gift may be seen as more appropriate. How gratitude is expressed to another might differ depending on how familiar one is with the other person.



# Thanks! A Strengths-Based Gratitude Curriculum for Tweens and Teens

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### **How To Use The Lessons (*cont'd*)**

Gratitude may also be expressed differently to a peer, as opposed to someone with a different social status. Welcoming discussion of these and other differences in the classroom will deepen students' understanding of gratitude.

In conversations about gratitude, it is essential to be mindful that some children may be living with significant challenges. These may include illness, family stress, the loss of a loved one, abuse, neglect, exposure to violence, discrimination, and economic hardship. Children who receive adult support (from their home, school, or community) in dealing with these challenges may have a heightened sense of gratitude for all that is in their environment that enables them to cope. On the other hand, children with fewer support systems may find it difficult to identify life events they feel grateful for.

Gratitude cannot be imposed from the outside. Suggesting that children “look on the bright side” in the face of personal struggle, community suffering, and/or systemic inequities would be very dismissive. Researchers Jeffrey Froh and Giacomo Bono suggest that an appropriate response to children for whom high levels of stress makes the experience of gratitude challenging is to listen deeply, empathize, and acknowledge their feelings.

An example might be to say, “That sounds really difficult...I can see why you are feeling like it can be hard to think of something to be grateful for.” Allowing children to be seen and heard, even when they are distressed, lets them know that their feelings are valid. By helping them understand and express their emotions, teachers can contribute to building children’s resilience, as well as their capacity to understand and acknowledge the feelings of others—which is essential to gratitude.

Another consideration that may arise when exploring gratitude in the classroom is the influence of materialism. In a society oriented to consumerism, students may tend to focus on material things when considering what they are grateful for. They may feel envious of the possessions of others. Or they may take their possessions for granted,





# Thanks! A Strengths-Based Gratitude Curriculum for Tweens and Teens

## Introduction

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### How To Use The Lessons (*cont'd*)

finding it difficult to value and appreciate what they do have. Introducing gratitude practices in the classroom can help diminish the sense of entitlement with which some students approach life. Through becoming more mindful of how to express gratitude, or through doing acts of kindness for others, they can experience both “giving” and “receiving” in ways that have a deep emotional impact. This can heighten awareness of the many intangible sources of good in our lives.

For more gratitude activities for grades K-8, [click here](#).

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- Videos: **Giacomo Bono, Rachel Baumsteiger, Susan Mangan**
- Exercises and activities: **Yvonne Huffaker, Giacomo Bono, Rachel Baumsteiger, Susan Mangan**

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## GRATITUDE ACTIVITY FOR TWEENS & TEENS

### Lesson 1 **Discover Your Great Full Self**

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Students identify their strengths to gain a better understanding of themselves.

**Time Required**

1 class period

**Grade Level**

6th – 12th grade

**Materials**

- [Lesson One PowerPoint slideshow](#)
- Computer and monitor or projector to show video
- Computer or other device for every student to take computer-based survey
- Poster paper (one per student), pencil, markers, colored pencils, etc.
- [VIA Strengths Poster](#)

**Learning Objectives**

- Students will:
- Identify their top five character strengths
  - Gain a greater understanding of themselves

**SEL Competencies**

- Self-Awareness
- Identifying personal strengths

**Getting Ready  
For This Activity**

Educators:  
Take the adult version of the [VIA](#) to explore your own character strengths. Do you agree with the survey results of your top five strengths (i.e., your signature strengths)? Think of a moment in your life when you were performing at your best, and consider how any of your top strengths factored into that successful moment.



# Lesson 1

## Discover Your Great Full Self

### How To Do It

#### Slide 1 Introduce the Lesson

Gratitude Activity  
Lesson 1

## Discover Your Great Full Self

We have a special opportunity to learn about gratitude, how to practice it and why, and to learn about the gifts we each carry around inside us so that we can use them to make the world better.

- Introduce this program and its purpose:
  - *These lessons give us a special opportunity to learn about gratitude, how to practice it and why, and to learn about the gifts we each carry around inside us so that we can use them to make the world better.*

#### Slide 2 Character Strengths

Gratitude Activity  
Lesson 1

## Character Strengths

Creativity Perspective  
Judgment Curiosity  
Honesty Bravery HUMOR Fairness  
PERSEVERANCE Zest  
Love Kindness Leadership  
Social Intelligence Love of Learning  
Forgiveness Humility PRUDENCE  
Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence Gratitude SELF-REGULATION  
HOPE Spirituality

- Introduce character strengths:



# Lesson 1

## Discover Your Great Full Self

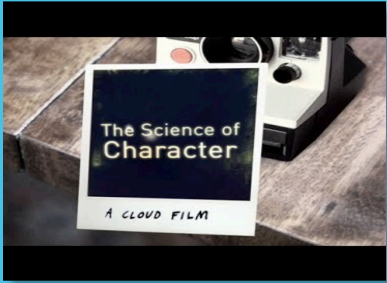
- *Before we get going on gratitude, we want to start this program by talking about YOU. Specifically, what are some of your top strengths?*
- *Character strengths are personal qualities, like honesty and leadership, that help you get along in the world and be a better person. People tend to be stronger at a few of these virtues than others. Knowing your character strengths and using them can help you be happier and more successful in the world. So...*
- Have students look at the word cloud on the slide and guess which would be their top three strengths.

### Slide 3 Character Strengths Video

Gratitude Activity  
Lesson 1

### What Are Character Strengths?

Watch this video to learn more about Character Strengths, why they matter, and what they mean for you!



- Have students watch the video "[The Science of Character](#)" (8 minutes).



# Lesson 1

## Discover Your Great Full Self

### Slide 4 Character Strengths Survey

Gratitude Activity  
Lesson 1

## Character Strengths

Take a Character Strength survey at this website:  
<https://www.viacharacter.org/survey/account/register>

Record your top 5 strengths and a brief description of each.

wisdom	courage	humanity	transcendence	justice	moderation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>creativity</li><li>curiosity</li><li>judgment</li><li>love of learning</li><li>perspective</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>bravery</li><li>persistence</li><li>honesty</li><li>aut</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>love</li><li>kindness</li><li>social intelligence</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>appreciation of beauty</li><li>gratitude</li><li>hope</li><li>humour</li><li>spirituality</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>teamwork</li><li>fairness</li><li>leadership</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>forgiveness</li><li>modesty</li><li>prudence</li><li>self-control</li></ul>

- After watching the video, tell students that they will now take an online survey that will help them discover their own character strengths.
  - *Now it's your turn to find about YOUR strengths! We're going to take a survey that will help you identify your character strengths.*
  - *Everyone pull out a device and go to the following [website](#) (see slide).*
  - *Under the heading, "Register to Get Started," enter your name, email, gender, date of birth, and a password. Make sure the second box ("I have read...of this agreement") is checked, then click "register."*
  - *On the next page, select, "I want to take the VIA survey for youth" (it's shorter than the adult version), then click, "Take survey."*
  - *On the next page, select, "I am taking the survey for myself." Answer all of the questions.*



# Lesson 1

## Discover Your Great Full Self

• At the end of the survey, you will come to a page labeled "demographics." You can fill in the information if you wish, or you can just click, "Complete survey."

• On the next page, click "Download your character strengths profile."

- Teachers: If you haven't yet taken the survey, please do so now!
- After everyone has completed the survey, tally up everyone's strengths (see the next slide).

### Slide 5

#### Tallying Up the Class's Character Strengths

Gratitude Activity  
Lesson 1

**VIA Classification of Character Strengths and Virtues**  
*The Character Strengths of a Flourishing Life*

WISDOM	COURAGE	HUMANITY	JUSTICE	TEMPERANCE	TRANSCENDENCE
<b>Creativity</b> Originality, artistic creativity	<b>Bravery</b> Value an abstract form of fearlessness for the sake of right	<b>Love</b> Both loving and being loved; includes close relations with others	<b>Trustworthiness</b> Civility, social responsibility, honesty	<b>Forgiveness</b> Mercy and mercy after wrongdoing; open-mindedness	<b>Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence</b> Awe, wonder, elevation
<b>Curiosity</b> Interest, exploring, intellectual, openness to experience	<b>Perseverance</b> Persistence, industry, finishing what one starts	<b>Kindness</b> Generosity, kindness, care, compassion, altruism, "helper"	<b>Fairness</b> Acting and being being fair, decisions about others	<b>Humility</b> Modesty, being open to accomplishments, open to correction	<b>Gratitude</b> Thankfulness for the good; recognizing benefits, feeling blessed
<b>Judgment</b> Critical thinking, thinking things through, open-minded	<b>Leadership</b> Authority, integrity	<b>Social Intelligence</b> Emotional intelligence, aware of the needs, feelings, and goals of others; knowing what makes other people tick	<b>Leadership</b> Organizing, providing structure, encouraging a group to act together	<b>Prudence</b> Careful, cautious, not taking unnecessary risks	<b>Hope</b> Optimism, faith, resilience, active-constructive
<b>Love of Learning</b> Nourishing one's self in learning; systematic or adding to knowledge	<b>Self</b> Having one's own goals; being one and ahead			<b>Self-Regulation</b> Self-control, discipline, managing impulses & emotions	<b>Humor</b> Playfulness, bringing smiles to others, light-hearted
<b>Persepective</b> Wisdom, providing wise counsel; taking the long-term view					<b>Spirituality</b> Religiosity, faith, purpose, meaning

**VIA INSTITUTE ON CHARACTER**  
(where the world finds strength)  
www.viacharacter.org

- Tally up the class's strengths: Ask the students to look at their top two strengths. Then get a tally of how many students had one of their top two strengths in the wisdom category, courage category, etc.
- Then reveal what your class's top strengths were, e.g., "Looks like our class is really high on justice and courage!" This is a fun way for everyone to get a sense of each other's strengths.

# Lesson 1

## Discover Your Great Full Self

### Slide 6

#### How You Can Use Your Strengths

Gratitude Activity  
Lesson 1

### Character Strengths

In pairs, turn to a partner and share one way you could use each of your top strengths to do something nice for someone.

 <b>wisdom</b>	 <b>courage</b>	 <b>humanity</b>	 <b>transcendence</b>	 <b>justice</b>	 <b>moderation</b>
<small>//creativity //curiosity //judgement //love of learning //perspective</small>	<small>//bravery //persistence //honesty //zest</small>	<small>//love //kindness //social intelligence</small>	<small>//appreciation of beauty //gratitude //hope //spirituality</small>	<small>//teamwork //fairness //leadership</small>	<small>//forgiveness //modesty //prudence //self-control</small>

- Students will now have an opportunity to discuss how they might use their strengths.
  - *Next I want you to get into partners and discuss how you could each use one of your top strengths to help others or society. For example, if one of your top strengths is bravery, then you might make a good firefighter. Or, if you score high in creativity, then you could use it to create music. If you score high in kindness, how might you find opportunities to encourage others to be kind?*
- Give students a few minutes to discuss their strengths with a partner.
- Hand out poster materials and have each student create a poster that lists his or her top five character strengths. This can be as creative as they would like and could include art work that symbolizes their strengths. They could use pictures, images, drawings and words to describe themselves and their top five strengths. (OPTION: This can also be done as homework.)
- Teachers can create their own simpler poster that lists two of their top five strengths, one that may be apparent to most students and one that may not be.



# Lesson 1

## Discover Your Great Full Self

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### **Reflection After The Activity**

- Ask for a few volunteers to share an idea for how to use a particular strength.
- Ask students to reflect either verbally or in written form about something that they discovered about themselves or that surprised them from this activity.





## GRATITUDE ACTIVITY FOR TWEENS & TEENS

### Lesson 2 **See The Good Challenge**

---

Students discuss what gratitude means and why it is important.

**Time Required**

1 class period

**Grade Level**

6th – 12th grade

**Materials**

- [Lesson 2 PowerPoint slideshow](#)
- Computer and monitor or projector to show video(s)
- 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 Objectives**

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

**SEL Competencies**

- Social Awareness
  - Practicing empathy, including perspective taking
- Responsible Decision-Making
  - Understanding the motivations for actions and their realistic consequences

**Getting Ready  
For This Activity**

Educators:  
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 his or her action benefited you. How does keeping a gratitude journal make you feel?



# Lesson 2

## See The Good Challenge

### How To Do It

#### Slide 1 Introduce the Lesson

Gratitude Activity  
Lesson 2

## See The Good Challenge

Let's learn what gratitude is and why it can make us feel better.

- 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

Gratitude Activity  
Lesson 2

## Gratitude

Gratitude = The ability to recognize and acknowledge the good things, people, and places in our lives.

- After several students offer their definitions of gratitude, offer them this definition.



# Lesson 2

## See The Good Challenge

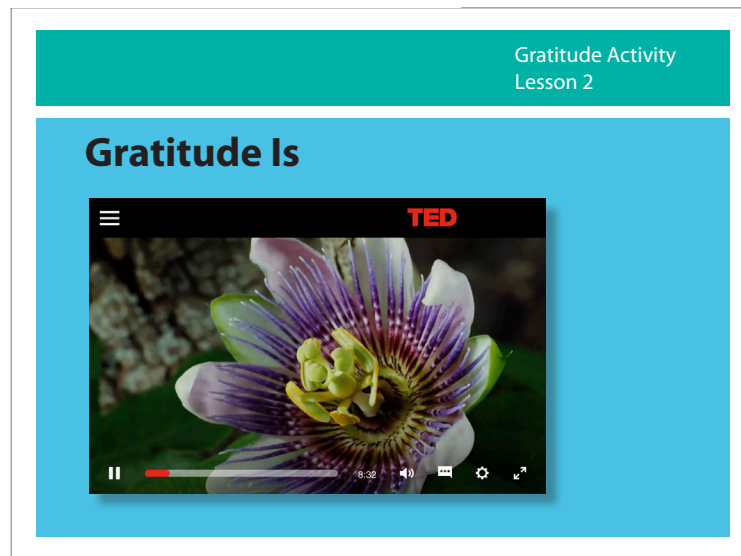
### Slide 2

#### Definition of Gratitude (cont'd)

- *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. 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).



## Lesson 2

# See The Good Challenge

### Slide 4

#### Why Gratitude Is Good

Gratitude Activity  
Lesson 2

### Why Gratitude Is Good

- It feels good!
- Better physical health
- It makes relationships stronger
- It makes people feel happier in the long-run



- 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 tend to feel happier overall.*



## Lesson 2


# See The Good Challenge

### Slide 5 Gratitude Warmup

Gratitude Activity  
Lesson 2

### Warmup

Turn to a partner and share three things you are grateful for today.



- 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 what we might ask ourselves when we feel gratitude...*



# Lesson 2

## See The Good Challenge


### Slide 6

#### When Should You Feel Grateful?

Gratitude Activity  
Lesson 2

### When Should You Feel Grateful?

- Someone helps you on purpose
- The help that person offers benefits you
- Helping you cost that person something
  - Costs can include time, money, effort, etc.



- Discuss with students the intention, cost, and benefit--or "benefit appraisals"--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) versus for selfless reasons (like deciding ahead of time to do something helpful just for you).*
  - *Second, did the person's help benefit you? Think about it: For someone to help you, he or she 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 his or her 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.*



## Lesson 2


# See The Good Challenge

### Slide 7

#### When Should You Feel Grateful?

Gratitude Activity  
Lesson 2

### Video



- 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.
- 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 [video](#) to introduce the gratitude journal (2:24).
  - If there are students skeptical about gratitude journaling, watch this [video](#) (2:04).

#### Reflection After The Activity

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

# Gift Of The Magi

By O. Henry



ONE DOLLAR AND EIGHTY-SEVEN CENTS.

That was all. She had put it aside, one cent and then another and then another, in her careful buying of meat and other food. Della counted it three times. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be **Christmas**.

There was nothing to do but fall on the bed and cry. So Della did it.

While the lady of the home is slowly growing quieter, we can look at the home. **Furnished** rooms at a cost of \$8 a week. There is little more to say about it.

In the hall below was a letter-box too small to hold a letter. There was an electric bell, but it could not make a sound. Also there was a name beside the door: "Mr. James Dillingham Young."



# Gift Of The Magi

When the name was placed there, Mr. James Dillingham Young was being paid \$30 a week. Now, when he was being paid only \$20 a week, the name seemed too long and important. It should perhaps have been "Mr. James D. Young." But when Mr. James Dillingham Young entered the furnished rooms, his name became very short indeed. Mrs. James Dillingham Young put her arms warmly about him and called him "Jim." You have already met her. She is Della.

Della finished her crying and cleaned the marks of it from her face. She stood by the window and looked out with no interest. Tomorrow would be Christmas Day, and she had only \$1.87 with which to buy Jim a gift. She had put aside as much as she could for months, with this result. Twenty dollars a week is not much. Everything had cost more than she had expected. It always happened like that.

Only \$ 1.87 to buy a gift for Jim. Her Jim. She had had many happy hours planning something nice for him. Something nearly good enough. Something almost worth the honor of belonging to Jim.

There was a looking-glass between the windows of the room. Perhaps you have seen the kind of looking-glass that is placed in \$8 furnished rooms. It was very narrow. A person could see only a little of himself at a time. However, if he was very thin and moved very quickly, he might be able to get a good view of himself. Della, being quite thin, had mastered this art.

Suddenly she turned from the window and stood before the glass. Her eyes were shining brightly, but her face had lost its color. Quickly she pulled down her hair and let it fall to its complete length.

The James Dillingham Youngs were very proud of two things which they owned. One thing was Jim's gold watch. It had once belonged to his father. And, long ago, it had belonged to his father's father. The other thing was Della's hair.

If a queen had lived in the rooms near theirs, Della would have washed and dried her hair where the queen could see it. Della knew her hair was more beautiful than any queen's **jewels** and gifts.

If a king had lived in the same house, with all his riches, Jim would have looked at his watch every time they met. Jim knew that no king

# Gift Of The Magi

had anything so valuable.

So now Della's beautiful hair fell about her, shining like a falling stream of brown water. It reached below her knee. It almost made itself into a dress for her.

And then she put it up on her head again, nervously and quickly. Once she stopped for a moment and stood still while a tear or two ran down her face.

She put on her old brown coat. She put on her old brown hat. With the bright light still in her eyes, she moved quickly out the door and down to the street.

Where she stopped, the sign said: "Mrs. Sofronie. Hair Articles of all Kinds."

Up to the second floor Della ran, and stopped to get her breath.

Mrs. Sofronie, large, too white, cold-eyed, looked at her.

"Will you buy my hair?" asked Della.

"I buy hair," said Mrs. Sofronie. "Take your hat off and let me look at it."

Down fell the brown waterfall.

"Twenty dollars," said Mrs. Sofronie, lifting the hair to feel its weight.

"Give it to me quick," said Della.

Oh, and the next two hours seemed to fly. She was going from one shop to another, to find a gift for Jim.

She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else. There was no other like it in any of the shops, and she had looked in every shop in the city.

It was a gold watch chain, very simply made. Its value was in its rich and pure material. Because it was so plain and simple, you knew that it was very valuable. All good things are like this.

It was good enough for The Watch.

As soon as she saw it, she knew that Jim must have it. It was like him. Quietness and value—Jim and the chain both had quietness and value. She paid twenty-one dollars for it. And she hurried home with the chain and eighty-seven cents.

# Gift Of The Magi

With that chain on his watch, Jim could look at his watch and learn the time anywhere he might be. Though the watch was so fine, it had never had a fine chain. He sometimes took it out and looked at it only when no one could see him do it.

When Della arrived home, her mind quieted a little. She began to think more reasonably. She started to try to cover the sad marks of what she had done. Love and large-hearted giving, when added together, can leave deep marks. It is never easy to cover these marks, dear friends—never easy.

Within forty minutes her head looked a little better. With her short hair, she looked wonderfully like a schoolboy. She stood at the looking-glass for a long time.

“If Jim doesn’t kill me,” she said to herself, “before he looks at me a second time, he’ll say I look like a girl who sings and dances for money. But what could I do—oh! What could I do with a dollar and eighty-seven cents?”

At seven, Jim’s dinner was ready for him.

Jim was never late. Della held the watch chain in her hand and sat near the door where he always entered. Then she heard his step in the hall and her face lost color for a moment. She often said little prayers quietly, about simple everyday things. And now she said: “Please God, make him think I’m still pretty.”

The door opened and Jim stepped in. He looked very thin and he was not smiling. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two—and with a family to take care of! He needed a new coat and he had nothing to cover his cold hands.

Jim stopped inside the door. He was as quiet as a hunting dog when it is near a bird. His eyes looked strangely at Della, and there was an expression in them that she could not understand. It filled her with fear. It was not anger, nor surprise, nor anything she had been ready for. He simply looked at her with that strange expression on his face.

Della went to him.

“Jim, dear,” she cried, “don’t look at me like that. I had my hair cut off and sold it. I couldn’t live through Christmas without giving you a

# Gift Of The Magi

gift. My hair will grow again. You won't care, will you? My hair grows very fast. It's Christmas, Jim. Let's be happy. You don't know what a nice—what a beautiful nice gift I got for you.”

“You've cut off your hair?” asked Jim slowly. He seemed to labor to understand what had happened. He seemed not to feel sure he knew.

“Cut it off and sold it,” said Della. “Don't you like me now? I'm me, Jim. I'm the same without my hair.”

Jim looked around the room.

“You say your hair is gone?” he said.

“You don't have to look for it,” said Della. “It's sold, I tell you—sold and gone, too. It's the night before Christmas, boy. Be good to me, because I sold it for you. Maybe the hairs of my head could be counted,” she said, “but no one could ever count my love for you. Shall we eat dinner, Jim?”

Jim put his arms around his Della. For ten seconds let us look in another direction. Eight dollars a week or a million dollars a year—how different are they? Someone may give you an answer, but it will be wrong. The **magi** brought valuable gifts, but that was not among them. My meaning will be explained soon.

From inside the coat, Jim took something tied in paper. He threw it upon the table.

“I want you to understand me, Dell,” he said. “Nothing like a haircut could make me love you any less. But if you'll open that, you may know what I felt when I came in.”

White fingers pulled off the paper. And then a cry of joy; and then a change to tears.

For there lay The **Combs**—the combs that Della had seen in a shop window and loved for a long time. Beautiful combs, with jewels, perfect for her beautiful hair. She had known they cost too much for her to buy them. She had looked at them without the least hope of owning them. And now they were hers, but her hair was gone.

But she held them to her heart, and at last was able to look up and say: “My hair grows so fast, Jim!”

# Gift Of The Magi

And then she jumped up and cried, “Oh, oh!”

Jim had not yet seen his beautiful gift. She held it out to him in her open hand. The gold seemed to shine softly as if with her own warm and loving spirit.

“Isn’t it perfect, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You’ll have to look at your watch a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how they look together.”

Jim sat down and smiled.

“Della,” said he, “let’s put our Christmas gifts away and keep them a while. They’re too nice to use now. I sold the watch to get the money to buy the combs. And now I think we should have our dinner.”

The magi, as you know, were wise men—wonderfully wise men—who brought gifts to the newborn Christ-child. They were the first to give Christmas gifts. Being wise, their gifts were doubtless wise ones. And here I have told you the story of two children who were not wise. Each sold the most valuable thing he owned in order to buy a gift for the other. But let me speak a last word to the wise of these days: Of all who give gifts, these two were the most wise. Of all who give and receive gifts, such as they are the most wise. Everywhere they are the wise ones. They are the magi.

# Gift Of The Magi

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS for “The Gift of the Magi” by O. Henry

1. What does Della’s hair signify to her? Be specific.
2. What does James’s watch signify to him? Be specific.
3. Are Della and James foolish for selling their most prized possessions? Why or why not?
4. Why might Della place more value in the gold chain for James’s watch than her own hair?
5. Why might James place more value in the combs for Della’s hair than his grandfather’s watch?
6. Do you feel James would have appreciated the gold chain given what it cost?
7. Do you feel Della would have appreciated the combs given what it cost?
8. What does O. Henry want his readers to take away from this story about the following:
  - a. Gift giving?
  - b. Altruism?
  - c. Love?

# Gratitude Challenge

## Instructions

WHO or WHAT are you GRATEFUL for and WHY? Did something good happen recently that you feel grateful for? Do you feel grateful for someone? It can be something special or important, or it can be something small—as long as it's a good thing or makes you feel good. Just be SPECIFIC so that you can record and recall meaningful events!

For example,

At home:

"I ate a delicious breakfast this morning because Mom/Dad took the time to cook me breakfast."

At school:

"A friend (or teacher) held the door open for me because he or she was being nice."

After school:

"My team won a game today because everyone worked hard all week".

"Watching something on YouTube" or "Playing a game because I got to a new level and/or figured out something out."

On the weekend:

"A neighbor (or relative) helped me with something because he or she knew what I needed (or wanted to help me)."

"Watched a movie with family (or friend/s) because it was fun/interesting or something I wanted to see or do."

Challenge yourself to find or see the good in your life every day. The more the better! It could be big or small things. It could be good people or things or it could be bad things that turned out less bad or bad things that thankfully didn't happen. You decide. Challenge yourself regularly and let's see what happens!

Here are different areas in your life that you could challenge yourself to find gratitude in: home, school, health, friendship, things you own, special occasions (for example, a trip or a party), kindness or support from others, an achievement or performance.

# Gratitude Journal

## Instructions

List 3 THINGS or PEOPLE you are GRATEFUL for today and say WHY. Do this twice a week. *For example, "My grandpa unexpectedly gave me a ride home from school because he didn't want me to walk home in the heat."*

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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# Good Week Reflection

## Instructions

Choose an entry or two from your Gratitude Journal to reflect on. Was it someone who did something nice or helpful for you? Why did this person do it? What did he or she do to make it happen? And how did it affect you? If it didn't involve another person and it was just a good thing that happened, then describe your experience and how it affected you.

*For example, "My grandpa unexpectedly gave me a ride home from school because he didn't want me to walk home in the heat. He didn't go play cards with his friends because he cares about me. Thanks to this I got home early and wasn't tired or sweaty. This made me happy because I got to see Grandpa and had extra time to play a game later."*

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# Subtracting Good Things

## Instructions

Look back at your Good Week Reflections and choose one to DESCRIBE HOW YOUR LIFE WOULD BE DIFFERENT IF that thing didn't happen or if someone didn't help make it happen. To be done once every other week.

*For example, "If my Grandpa did not give me a ride home from school the other day, I would have walked home in the horrible heat, carrying my heavy backpack. I would have gotten tired, sweaty, and hungry and would not have wanted to do anything. It would have been hard to do my homework and I would not have had extra time for myself."*

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## GRATITUDE ACTIVITY FOR TWEENS & TEENS

### Lesson 3

## Seeing The Good In Others

Students look for the good in others by acknowledging each other's strengths.

**Time Required**

1 class period

**Grade Level**

6th – 12th grade

**Materials**

- [Lesson 3 PowerPoint slideshow](#)
- Post-its for every student
- *Go Out and Fill Buckets* handout for each student OR for Middle School *Growing Up with a Bucket Full of Happiness* by Carol McCloud
- Students' strengths posters from Lesson 1

**Learning Objectives**

Students will:

- Understand the importance of being specific when grateful (e.g., we are thankful to someone for something)
- Understand gratitude as an intentional act
- Appreciate each other for qualities or actions reflecting our character strengths

**SEL Competencies**

- Social Awareness
  - Recognizing individual strengths
- Relationship Skills
  - Cultivating connection and friendship

**Getting Ready For This Activity**

Educators:

Think about a time when someone filled your bucket (brought you joy) or when you filled someone else's. How did it make you feel?



# Lesson 3

## Seeing The Good In Others

### How To Do It

#### Slide 1 Introduce the Lesson



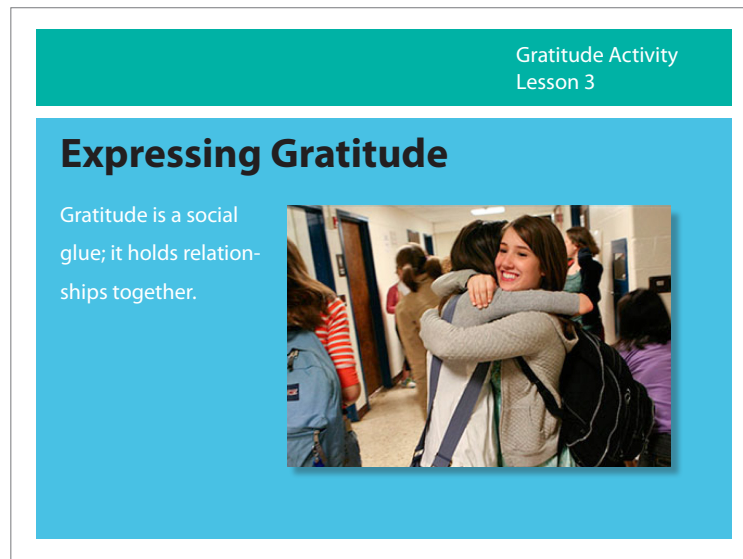
Gratitude Activity  
Lesson 3

## See The Good Challenge

Let's learn what gratitude is and why it can make us feel better.

- Introduce the lesson.
  - *Today the focus is on expressing gratitude, but let's start off with a quick review...*


#### Slide 2 Expressing Gratitude



Gratitude Activity  
Lesson 3

## Expressing Gratitude

Gratitude is a social glue; it holds relationships together.



- If you like, ask a few volunteers to share something they wrote in their gratitude journals for homework.



## Lesson 3

# Seeing The Good In Others

### Slide 2

#### Expressing Gratitude (cont'd)

- Tell students:
  - *Expressing gratitude, or saying “thank you,” is critical for relationships. It helps each person recognize the other person’s efforts and makes the other person feel appreciated. When we express gratitude, we communicate to the important people in our lives how they matter to us AND, over time, we get closer to these people because they help us reach significant goals in our lives. It’s glue for who and what matters!*

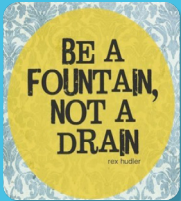
### Slide 3

#### Gratitude Is A Choice


Gratitude Activity  
Lesson 3

### Gratitude Is A Choice

**You choose how you think.**  
It's your choice to focus on good things or bad things in life.



**You also choose how you act.**  
It's also your choice whether you want to do things that lift others up or bring them down.



- Do the following quick experiment:
  - *Look around the room for 20 seconds to find all the blue things that you can see... (wait 20 seconds).*
  - *OK, what did you see that was green? After students point out that you said 'blue', reply: "But you looked around, right? So why can't you tell me what was green?"*
  - *This illustrates how we expand what we focus on in our minds, while everything else (the green) fades away. Our brains rewire this way!*



## Lesson 3

# Seeing The Good In Others

### Slide 3

#### Gratitude Is A Choice (cont'd)

- Then explain to students:
  - *It's important to realize that you choose how you look at life and what focus you can take throughout the day.*
  - *You can spend all of your time and energy thinking about all the things that go wrong in life, looking at people's negative characteristics, and doing things to feel better about yourself at the expense of others.*
  - *Or you can choose to appreciate all the good things that you have in your life, recognize people's positive characteristics, and do things that make others feel better about themselves.*

### Slide 4

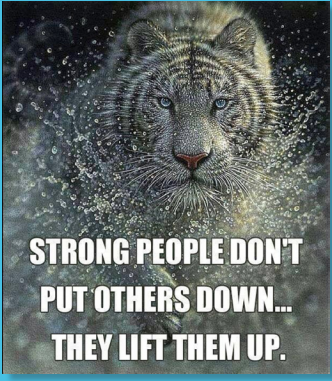
#### Bucket Filling (Part 1)

Gratitude Activity  
Lesson 3

### "Bucket Filling"

Things that lift others up (or "fill their buckets") include:

- Being friendly
- Expressing gratitude
- Complimenting them on their strengths/talents
- Encouraging them to pursue goals
- Showing compassion



- Read either the "Go and Fill Out Buckets MS-HS" handout or McCloud book on Bucket Filling.
  - *Having our buckets full not only makes us happy. It also makes us strong because it's like having a tank full of gas. With full buckets we keep trying new options to solve problems rather than quit, we can keep going rather than give up. A full bucket feels good now, but keeps us strong when we need to be, too.*



## Lesson 3

# Seeing The Good In Others

### Slide 4

#### Bucket Filling (Part 1) cont'd

- Ask students for examples of ways people have filled their buckets. Discuss with students:
  - *These are special people who CHOSE to be nice to you. How do they make you feel? Do they make you feel grateful? You, too, can CHOOSE to appreciate these special people in your life.*

### Slide 5

#### Bucket Filling (Part 2)

Gratitude Activity  
Lesson 3

### "Bucket Filling"

Practice expressing kindness towards your classmates.

You can:

- Tell them thank you for doing something kind for you
- Compliment them on one of their strengths or talents
- Commend them for a behavior that exemplifies one of their character strengths



- Now it's time for students to fill each other's buckets. Introduce the activity during which students will leave post-it "Thanks" that acknowledge/compliment others' character strengths on their posters.
- Teachers should first share their own strengths poster.
  - *You may all know about this strength of mine, but maybe you didn't know about this one. What are ways you've noticed them? (Be sure to thank students who offer ideas.)*
- Provide some examples of post-it thanks that acknowledge others' strengths:
  - *Thanks for helping me carry my project into school. You showed kindness.*
  - *I appreciate your jokes yesterday. Your humor helped pick me up. Thanks.*



## Lesson 3

# Seeing The Good In Others

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### Slide 5 Bucket Filling (Part 2) cont'd

- *Thanks for your help on the assignment. You showed teamwork.*

- Challenge students to look for the good in others by acknowledging each other's strengths. (Note: To make sure that each student gets something written about him or her, you can have students draw names or turn to a neighbor on one side.)
  - *This helps us appreciate the gifts we all have to share and the good qualities of friends.*
  - Allow students several quick occasions to fill buckets to cultivate a sense of connection to peers and to improve classroom climate.
- Introduce the homework, which is to write about and thank people who noticed or supported a strength or talent of yours.
  - *Write about a time when someone did NOT notice you or a talent of yours. How did that make you feel? Then write about a time someone DID notice you or a talent of yours. How did that make you feel?*
  - ***Make and share*** a thank you card with a person who noticed you or your talent (*mention WHAT THIS PERSON DOES THAT MATTERS PERSONALLY to you, the person's EFFORTS ON YOUR BEHALF, and HOW THIS PERSON'S BEHAVIOR MAKES YOU BETTER*).

### Reflection After The Activity

- Ask students to reflect on how it felt to have someone acknowledge their strengths and to acknowledge another person's strengths.
- Students might also identify one person in their lives whose "bucket" they would like to fill sometime in the next 24 hours.



# Go Out And Fill Buckets

Ideas about Bucket Filling from “How Full is Your Bucket” by Tom Rath and “Growing Up with a Bucket Full of Happiness” By Carol McCloud

You can read excerpts from the book or the entire book, but here is the main idea.

- **The Theory of the Dipper and the Bucket.** Each of us has an invisible bucket. It is constantly emptied or filled, depending on what others say or do to us. When our bucket is full, we feel great. When it’s empty, we feel awful. Each of us also has an invisible dipper. When we use that dipper to fill other people’s buckets - by saying or doing things to increase their positive emotions – we also fill our own bucket. But when we use that dipper to dip from other’s buckets – by saying or doing things that decrease their positive emotions – we diminish ourselves as well. Like the cup that runneth over, a full bucket gives us a positive outlook and renewed energy. Every drop in that bucket makes us stronger and more optimistic. But an empty bucket poisons our outlook, saps our energy, and undermines our will. That’s why every time someone dips from our bucket, it hurts us. So we face a choice very moment of every day: We can fill one another’s buckets, or we can dip from them. It’s an important choice – one that profoundly influences our relationships, productivity, health, and happiness. (p.15 How Full is Your Bucket)
- **Go out and fill buckets.** Give compliments to people, encourage them. When you are at school, look around and see if there is someone who looks like he or she may not be having a very good day and do something nice for that person, such as inviting him or her to hang out. Try each day to fill other people’s emotional buckets.
- **Avoid taking from another person’s bucket.** We take from others when we criticize or bully them or do anything else that brings someone down rather than builds him or her up. Those who have a need to take from someone else’s bucket are really just trying to fill their own empty bucket!
- **Fill a bully’s bucket, too.** Those individuals who take from others (bully, criticize, or treat negatively) are the people who usually need the most bucket filling. They are lacking love and acceptance in their own lives. Unfortunately, treating others negatively never gives us what we are lacking. According to Carol McCloud, we can never fill our own buckets by taking from the bucket of another person. Even though it feels like someone doesn’t deserve it, do something to fill this person’s bucket by

# Go Out And Fill Buckets

giving him or her a compliment, smile, or some other positive gesture that helps everyone feel better.

- Remember your loved ones. What about filling the buckets of people we know and love? What kinds of things can we do for our parents, siblings, and friends to show them how special they are to us? Doing this really makes you think about how much your loved ones do for you and how much they mean to you. Carol encourages us to think of more gestures we can make to show them how special they are. What can you do to fill the buckets of your loved ones?



## GRATITUDE ACTIVITY FOR TWEENS & TEENS

### Lesson 4 **Thank You for Believing in Me**

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Students learn how to think gratefully.

**Time Required**

1 class period

**Grade Level**

6th – 12th grade

**Materials**

- [Lesson 4 PowerPoint slideshow](#)
- Computer and monitor or projector to show video
- *Thank You, Mr. Falker* by Patricia Polacco
- Handout “HW Gratitude Letter” for each student

**Learning Objectives**

Students will:

- Understand how benefactors are significant in our lives by learning to think gratefully through the three perceptions that make up gratitude: personal value of benefits, cost to benefactors, and prosocial intentions of benefactors

**SEL Competencies**

- Social Awareness
  - Recognizing one’s needs
- Self-Management
  - Advocating for oneself and one’s needs
- Relationship Skills
  - Offering and seeking help

**Getting Ready  
For This Activity**

Educators:

Think of someone who saw your potential and helped you achieve it. What was the cost to this person for helping you and what did he or she intend for you? How did you benefit from this person’s help? How did it make you feel?



# Lesson 4

## Thank You for Believing in Me

### How To Do It

#### Slide 1 Introduce the Lesson

Gratitude Activity  
Lesson 4

## Thank You For Believing in Me

How to think and receive gratefully.

- Introduce the lesson.
  - *Today the focus is on learning to think gratefully. But first, let's review...*

#### Slide 2 Benefit Appraisals

Gratitude Activity  
Lesson 4

## Benefit Appraisals

**Costs:** Time, money, energy, etc. that it takes for one person to help another

**Benefits:** The advantages that someone receives when another person helps him or her

**Intentions:** The helper's goal

- Review benefit appraisals from lesson 2 with students.
  - *Benefit appraisals refer to the process of evaluating what it means when someone helps another person.*



## Lesson 4

# Thank You for Believing in Me

### Slide 2

#### Benefit Appraisals (cont'd)

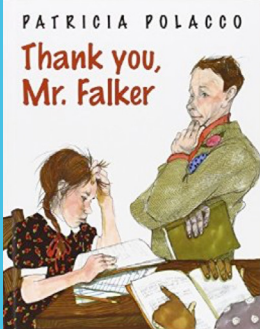

- *When someone helps another person, it usually costs him or her something—time, effort, or money.*
- *In addition, the person's help actually benefits the other person, which means that he or she understands what that person needs and decides that it is worthwhile to help out.*
- *Finally, the fact that a person helps another means that he or she cares enough to want to make that other person do or feel better. For example, if your friend helps you study for a big test, then he or she is probably sacrificing his or her own time to help you do better because he or she cares about you.*
- *Recognizing all of these elements can help you feel more grateful.*

### Slide 3

#### Thank You, Mr. Falker

Gratitude Activity  
Lesson 4

### Let's Read And Get Autobiographical!



- Before reading *Thank You, Mr. Falker*, ask students:
  - *Why is it better to face up to challenges and ask people for help rather than avoid challenges?*
  - *How can we reframe struggle to keep trying?*
  - *How can we appreciate our mentors or benefactors?*



## Lesson 4

# Thank You for Believing in Me

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### Slide 3 Thank You, Mr. Falker (cont'd)

- Read the story *Thank You, Mr. Falker* to the whole class. Wait to read the last two paragraphs to the students until after the following discussion.
- After reading the story, discuss with students:
  - *What did the main character NEED? What difficulty or hardships did she face?*
  - *As reading got harder for Trisha, what did she do instead? Why?*
  - *Who influenced her and how? (Mr. Falker, family, kinder friends)*
  - *Trisha learned to read and write, but what else happened to her? How did she feel? (joyous, proud) How did her life change? (no more teasing/bullying)*
  - *What was the VALUE OF BENEFIT? (she was no longer teased/ bullied or alone/ashamed, able to succeed past a major struggle)*
  - *What was the COST TO THE BENEFACTOR? (Mr. Falker's time and effort)*
  - *What was the BENEFACTOR'S INTENTION? (He saw her strengths of courage and cunning, believed in her, and wanted to help her.)*
- Now mention that there is a secret ending. Read the last two paragraphs and discuss further:
  - *What did the girl DO with her new skill? How did it affect her later in her life?*
  - *How did she turn the gift Mr. Falker gave her into an act of gratitude?*
  - *How do you think Mr. Falker felt when he learned about her life?*



# Lesson 4

## Thank You for Believing in Me

### Slide 4 Your Helpers



Gratitude Activity  
Lesson 4

### Your Helpers: "Thank You, \_\_\_\_\_"

Think about the people who support you.

- How do they help you?
- What do they give up to help you?
- How is their help valuable or beneficial for you?
- Why do they help you?

Pick a significant benefactor in your life and write a thank you letter to him or her. Be sure that you give it to this person as a thank you!



- Give a personal example of a time when someone helped you.
- Break students into small groups to discuss:
  - *Have you ever had a need like the girl in the story? What is a struggle or hardship you've faced? Have you ever not asked for help when you needed it? Why?*
  - *Have you ever overcome a big challenge thanks to someone's help? Explain.*
  - *What did it COST the person who helped you? (Time? Effort?)*
  - *Why did the person INTEND (want) to help you? What talents did he or she see in you?*
  - *How did the person notice? How did he or she help or encourage you? How did it change you? Why did it matter? (VALUE) How did this event make you feel?*



## Lesson 4

# Thank You for Believing in Me

### Slide 4

#### Your Helpers (cont'd)



- Have students watch this video: [Science Behind Gratitude Expression](#)
- Introduce the autobiographical part of the homework assignment: writing and delivering a special, personalized GRATITUDE LETTER for a significant person in their lives.
  - *Some relationships are special. They're not all equal.*
  - *Expressing thanks is like a gift we can give to these special people in our lives.*
- Be sure to have students include the three aspects of grateful thinking in the letter: value of the benefit, cost to the benefactor, and intention of the benefactor. Students should use this Gratitude Letter Template to help them write it.
- After writing the letter, students should add images or symbols that represent their own top character strengths and that inspire them. Students could also choose to draw a short comic strip in their letter to represent the special role the significant person plays in their life.
- This thank you letter will be a special gift for students to give to their benefactors.





## Lesson 4

# Thank You for Believing in Me

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### **Reflection After The Activity**

Ask students to reflect on how it felt to write and then personally deliver a thank you letter to someone who benefited them.

# Gratitude Letter

## Instructions

Choose an adult (preferably a mentor) who you are really grateful for and write him or her a letter to express your gratitude. Remember to be honest and specific. The more effort you put into writing your letter, the more your message will mean to the other person.

You can use the letter template below and fill in the blank spaces, or write the entire letter in your own words. You can include anything you want, but be sure to describe:

- The ways this person helped you
- How this person's help benefited you and made your life better
- The time or effort it cost that person to help you
- Why this person chose to help you
- How you feel about this person

After you write your letter, give it to the other person. You could deliver your letter in person, read it to him or her over the phone, or send it through email—it's up to you! But remember, this activity works best if you read the letter in person. We know it may feel a bit awkward, but it's more likely to make you and the other person feel good!

## Gratitude Letter Template

Dear Person's name,

Thank you so much for (describe the kinds of things this person has done to help you). This has really helped me (describe how this person's actions have benefited you or what he or she inspires you to do). I also really appreciate how you (describe other things that this person does to help you or make your life better). I realize that (describe what it costs this person to help you in these ways). Your actions show me that (say why you think this person wanted to help you) and (what promise you think this person sees in you). I (describe how you feel about this person). Thanks to you I want to (say what this person motivates you to do).

Gratefully,

Your name

# Gratitude Letter

## Post-Visit Reflection

In a paragraph, describe your experience of the gratitude visit (how it made the person feel, how it made you feel, what you learned, what you want to take away from it, and any additional detail about what it motivates you to do). Also, from this experience, why do you think gratitude is important to express in relationships?

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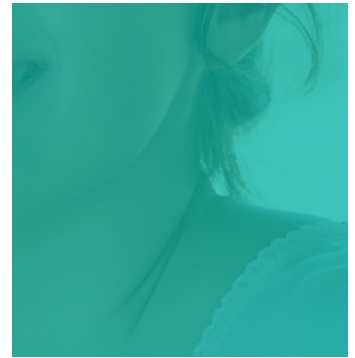
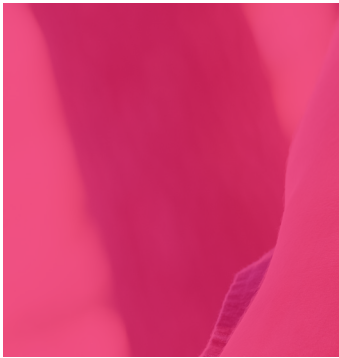
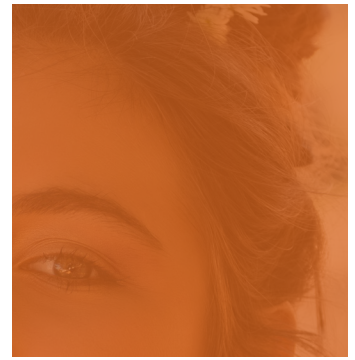
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