



Being thankful for the good things in life

EXPANDED DEFINITION

Experiencing and expressing gratitude will increase your sense of wellbeing by making life feel more satisfying. When you experience gratitude, you recall positive memories. And expressing gratitude to others helps strengthen your relationship with them.



CHARACTER IN ACTION Andy Robinson, USMC

Marine Andy Robinson suffered a devastating injury in Iraq in 2006. Eleven years later, while thumbing through the pages of a National Geographic magazine, Andy caught an image of a bloody patient on an operating table. He quickly realized that he was the subject of the photo, taken just moments after he nearly lost his life in Iraq.

Andy set out to find the doctor who saved his life and express his deep gratitude for the 3,000 amazing days of life he's had since that day in Iraq. After searching for months, he found the surgeon, Dr. Hernandez, and called him to simply say thank you.

MENTORSHIP QUESTIONS

(10 minutes)

- + Paint the picture of the last time you said thank you to someone. Where were you? What did they do to earn your thanks? How did they react when they were thanked? How did it make you feel to thank someone?
- + Why is it important to be appreciative of people or good things in your life?
- + What are other ways you can express your gratitude for people in your life other than saying thank you?
- + How do you think your relationship will change with others if you express your gratitude more often?



ACTIVITY: LETTERS OF GRATITUDE

OBJECTIVES

- + Students will distinguish between being thankful and having gratitude.
- + Students will identify people in their life who have made a positive impact on them.
- + Students will write a letter to someone in their life who they are grateful for.

Time: 55 minutes

Materials:

- + TMF Gratitude Postcards (TMF regional teams will provide these materials)
- + Pens, colored pencils, or crayons



DIRECTIONS

Introduction of Gratitude

(5 minutes)

- + Ask students to come up with a working definition of gratitude.
- + Share a personal story about how gratitude was used in the mentor's life or refer to the Character in Action story.

Letters of Gratitude

(30 minutes)

- + Students will write a postcard of gratitude to someone they value in their life.
- + The TMF Gratitude Postcards can be colored in or decorated. Depending on the age of the student, use different templates.
- + Challenge students to be specific about what the person did for them and how they impacted their life.
- + Ideas for the students:
 - Inform the person about what you are doing now.
 - Mention how often you remember what this person did for you.
 - Think about the person's character strengths. Do you remember them being especially kind? Fair? Creative? Include their strengths in the letter and explain how their influence made an impact on you.
- + Once the letter is written, encourage students to call the person and tell them you'd like to visit, but be vague about the purpose of the meeting; this is much more fun when it is a surprise.
- + If it's not possible to hand-deliver, put the postcard in the mail. Nobody gets fun mail anymore.

DEBRIEF AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

(10 minutes)

- + How did it make you feel to thank someone and put it down in writing?
- + How do you think the other person will react when they see this card?
- + Who else in your life could use a note of gratitude that might not get one often? Family? Friends? Teachers? People who work thankless jobs?



TRAVIS MANION
FOUNDATION

"If Not Me, Then Who..."

GRATITUDE

CALL TO ACTION

Gratitude Journal

Take five minutes to write down 2-3 things in your life that you are thankful for and how these things impact your life positively. Do this everyday.

More resources available at travismanion.org.

TMF strengths content is based on the Values in Action classification developed by the VIA Institute on Character.