

TEACHING GRATITUDE

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Two things.

First, I can be sarcastic. When humor turns to sarcasm, it's dangerous, because unintentionally I teach it to my kids. Their sarcasm surprises me when I don't expect it. In those moments, I need to watch my tone, because now I need to do some revised teaching.



Second, I do a great “Eeyore” impression. My wife reminds me of that when I get too negative about my day. My children parroted my complaining attitude when they gripe about their school days.

How can we teach character traits like having gratitude and showing positivity?

Do a Self-Check

Children learn sarcasm and negativity from the people around them, and that often means their parents. When we criticize and share stories of discontent around the dinner table or in the car, they hear us. Don't be surprised to hear your child parrot your negative patterns when talking about school, church, or other children. While it's impossible (and not even advisable) to always be positive or genuinely thankful around our children, it is important to intentionally model gratitude with our words and actions. Start small. Maybe commit to telling your child a story about one thing you're thankful for each day.

Find Teachable Moments (Over and Over Again)

Encourage your child to use basic manners like "please" and "thank you" when talking to grandparents or neighbors. Model gratitude (and mean it) by saying “Thank you for all you do” to a checkout clerk or your restaurant server.” When you finish a good meal out or enjoy an afternoon at a ball game, encourage reflection and conversation about the experience. Ask your child what they enjoyed most or what they liked about the meal or game.

Extend Gratitude to Others

Help your child write year end thank you letters to teachers, coaches, church youth leaders, and other important adults in your child's life. Seek out opportunities to serve with your children. Model compassion and action by donating to someone in need, volunteering, or practicing intentional acts of kindness. Give thanks to God for the skills and abilities he has given you to help others. After serving, encourage your child to think about and give thanks for all the ways other people serve them.

It can be so easy to forget to give thanks in life. But when we give our sincere gratitude to God, we enable ourselves to see his daily blessings even more clearly. Teaching our children habits of gratitude helps them never lose sight of God and his loving care.

Want to dig deeper? Check out Family Fire's article [Cultivating Gratitude](#)

written by Ron VandenBurg