Making Connections

November 6, 2024

**Mark Your Calendar!**

“Gratitude can transform common days into thanksgivings, turn routine jobs into joy, and change ordinary opportunities into blessings.” *William Arthur Ward*

You know how there are calendars that mark the days before Christmas? I suggest families create a calendar that marks the days before Thanksgiving. During the month of November, each member of the family writes something they are thankful for on the calendar. During the days leading up to Thanksgiving, the family focuses on those things that they can express gratitude for and improve their outlook at the same time. This no-cost, high profit practice of showing gratitude has seven scientifically proven benefits:

1. Gratitude opens the door to more relationships. Not only is it good manners to say “thank you”, it also helps you build relationships and gain new friends.
2. Gratitude improves physical health. Research shows that people who express gratitude have fewer aches and pains and they report feeling healthier than other people.
3. Gratitude improves psychological health. It reduces a wide variety of toxic emotions that can sabotage your efforts toward happiness. Gratitude also reduces depression, according to Dr. Robert A. Emmons, a leading gratitude researcher.
4. Gratitude enhances empathy and reduces aggression. Grateful people are more like to exhibit prosocial behavior. They express a higher level of sensitivity and empathy toward others.
5. Gratitude improves sleep. In an August 14, 2021 article published in the Harvard Health newsletter, it was revealed that writing in a gratitude journal before you go to bed can improve sleep and allow you to sleep longer.
6. Gratitude improves self-esteem. In a study conducted on athletes, it was revealed that gratitude increases an athlete’s self-esteem, which is an essential component to optimal performance.
7. Gratitude increases mental strength. In addition to reducing stress, gratitude has been found to play a major role in overcoming trauma. It has also been found to be a major contributor to resilience.

By taking time with your family each day to share and show gratitude, you’re making stronger connections. When you anchor your gratitude in your family, you build more resilient, happy, and loving relationships.

*Making connections for youth, families, and communities – Deb Andres*