

# Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

Course: Gratitude

Level:



**Objective:** Students will be able to identify the definition of gratitude, identify how to demonstrate **gratitude**, and effectively identify the benefits of a **grateful** attitude.

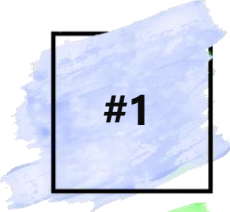


**Course Intent:** Students will be introduced to the concept of gratitude, discuss the importance of maintaining a grateful mindset and engage in hands-on practices to learn how to apply this concept.

## Applications & Benefits:

Students who focus on developing an appreciation for the positive aspects of their lives experience increased happiness, reduced hopelessness, psychological wellbeing, and a more positive outlook which improves classroom behavior and school culture while supporting the growth mindset.

## Course Snapshot

This course incorporates the following lessons.

LESSONS	ACTIVITY	TIME REQUIRED	RESOURCES & MATERIALS NEEDED
 #1 What is gratitude?	Whole-group discussion Shared writing	20 - 25 minutes	- Chart paper (or a similar method of shared writing such as a Smart Board) - Course information *Additional materials based on choice activity
 #2 Benefits of Having an Attitude of Gratitude	Whole-group discussion Shared writing	15 – 20 minutes	- Chart paper - Feelings chart (optional) - Course information
 #3 Exercises for Training	Whole-group Discussion Independent writing	15 – 20 minutes daily	Student journals

## Lesson Rationale

The rise in the rate of childhood depression in recent years directly impacts a student's desire to learn. When children are not formally taught how to be thankful for what they have, the problem becomes exacerbated throughout the matriculation process. Teachers are presented with a tremendous opportunity to teach students about the benefits of applying gratitude. Students who embrace a mindset of gratitude experience higher self-esteem, lower depression, and more positive emotions.

This lesson on gratitude will help improve students' interactions in the classroom and in their personal lives. It may be difficult to maintain a positive outlook during a negative situation, but gratitude allows for a student to look at all their skills, abilities, accomplishments, loved ones, and many things they do have to be thankful for.

Gratitude helps to reinforce the Growth Mindset as well, for example, "I did not get an A on the last exam, but I'm grateful that I learned a lot, and my score did jump from a C to a B+." Applying gratitude will help future negative situations to have limited impact on a student's overall attitude.

### HELPFUL TIPS

- Allow 5 - 10 minutes of class time each day for a few students to share what they are thankful for. This will encourage students to get in the habit of preparing their grateful statements before they speak, thus promoting accountability.
- Be patient with students who do not initially wish to participate in activities. Try offering them related lessons and coming back to previous lessons. Some students just need time to process the concept. This will help foster a sense of cooperation and belonging in the classroom.
- Lead by example. Whether you go first or last, it is important that students hear what you are grateful for every day. This will ensure that students observe you experiencing and benefiting from the exercise, which builds the value of the lesson.

### Praising Students

While it is important to praise students when they exhibit changed behavior, it should be done effectively and in moderation. This is because over-praising students can dilute the gratitude impulse as constant praise may result in an enlarged ego. Effective praise focuses on effort while ineffective praise focuses on approval. Over time, ineffective praise encourages students to seek that approval. Practicing gratefulness in our lives is an intrinsic process and seeking the extrinsic approval of teachers can be counterproductive to that process.

# Introductory Lesson 1: What is Gratitude?

## What to Know Before You Begin

### Discuss Definitions

#### *What does Gratitude mean?*

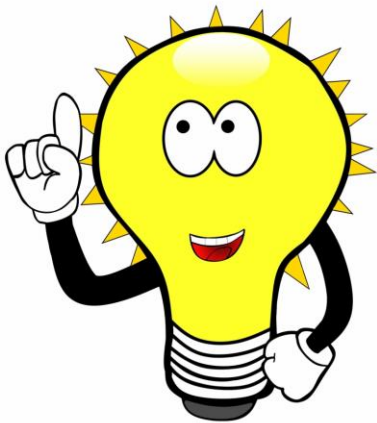
*Gratitude is the quality of being thankful, the ability to feel appreciation, and the intent to receive or return kindness.*

*Gratitude involves understanding and appreciating what we have, without comparing it to others in a negative way. Having gratitude requires that we realize that everyone struggles and no one's life is perfect, even if it looks that way. Living with an "attitude of gratitude" results in a more positive day. It is important to appreciate where we are in life, because many people in the past and present have experienced conditions much more difficult than our own.*

*Gratitude is acknowledging goodness. We affirm that there are good things in the world with the gifts and benefits we've received.*

#### *How is it applied?*

*Gratitude is applied by taking time to reflect and notice the things that you are thankful for.*



### Fascinating Details

"In a study called Counting Blessings vs. Burdens conducted in 2003, ill patients were required to keep a gratitude journal. Sixteen percent of subjects reported reduced symptoms, and 10% of subjects reported a decrease in pain." (Mindvalley Academy). This shows an association with practicing gratitude and reduced pain levels.

## Activity

Access students' prior knowledge by asking them what it means to have gratitude. On a piece of chart paper, create a bubble map with the students by writing the word 'gratitude' in the middle and adding their ideas to the connecting bubbles.

Example:



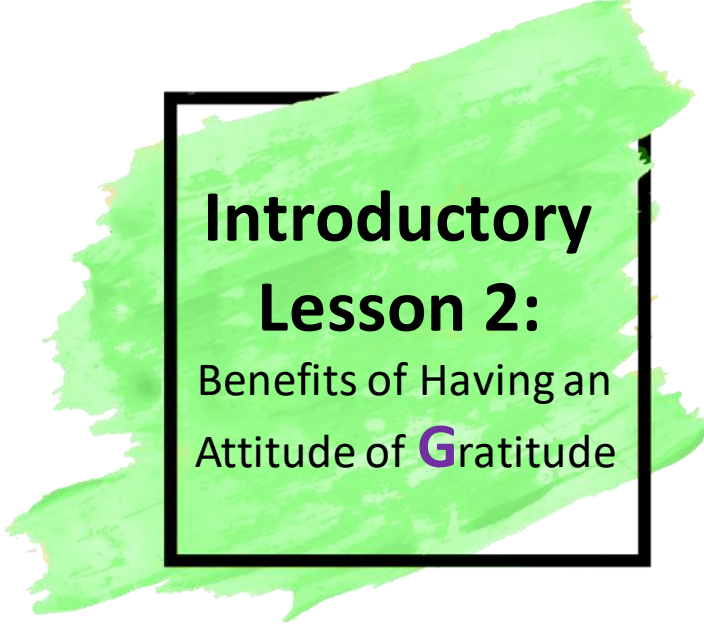
Incorporate the provided sample definitions as a guide to explore the concept of gratitude with students. Pose questions to stir discussion:

- What does gratitude feel like?
- How do you know when you are grateful for something or someone?
- How do others feel when you express gratitude?
- How does being grateful change your attitude?



Create a classroom display for gratitude:

- Make an acrostic using synonyms or descriptors of gratitude. For example, G might stand for 'grateful' and the A could be included in the word 'happy.'
- Write out the word gratitude in block or bubble letters on a large poster. Allow young students to color and create patterns to fill in the letters.
- Ask students to draw something they are grateful for on a small piece of paper. Add these to a display that reads, "We are Grateful!"



# Introductory Lesson 2: Benefits of Having an Attitude of Gratitude

## What to Know Before You Begin

### Benefits to students:

Increased happiness and positive mood. Classroom experience teaches us that students who focus on the positive aspects of their learning environment, the educational opportunity and the positive attributes of their teachers and role models are more likely to enjoy the learning process than students who view these topics in a negative manner.

Remove impatience and enhance decision making. Students who are more grateful demonstrate a lower incidence of impatient behavior during difficult situations. They therefore avoid problems that arise from a lack of patience, improving the decision-making process.

### Benefits to teachers:

Job satisfaction is of vital importance to a teacher's mental and emotional health, happiness and resilience. Teachers who understand that their role is vitally important to society, and who receive gratitude from parents, fellow teachers and administrators tend to enjoy a higher level of overall job satisfaction, despite the day to day challenges.

Improve work-related mental health and reduce stress. Finding aspects to be grateful for at work, even in stressful locations, can help to combat the negative side effects of a job.

## Activity

Ask students to share some things that they are thankful or grateful for. Make a list on a chalk board or paper and include input from each student. For students who feel angry, sad, or upset in the previous exercise, encourage them to find something about a positive situation to be grateful for.

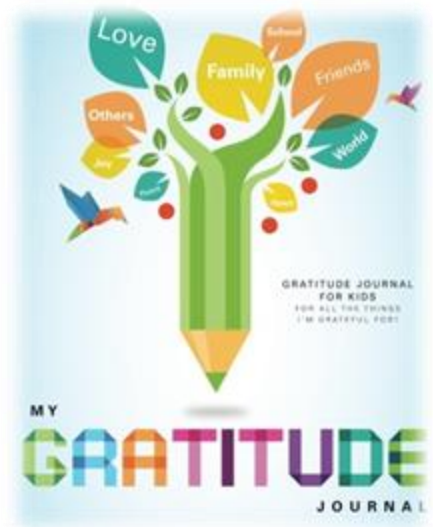
Revisit the feelings chart and prompt students to think about how they feel after talking about what they are thankful for. Using the information provided, explore with students how feeling grateful improves your mood and helps to create a positive outlook. Some discussion questions might include:

- How did your mood change?
- Looking back, has your outlook on your own situation changed?
- What might happen to our moods if we think about what we are grateful for every day?

# Introductory Lesson 3: Exercises for Training

## 1. Gratitude Journal

Students will either create or purchase a journal as their gratitude journal. Five minutes will be allotted each day for students to write down what they are thankful for. First, the teacher should model being specific. For example, by using the think aloud technique, a teacher might say, "I am grateful for my dog. There are a lot of things about my dog that I am grateful for, but today I am thankful that she walked on her leash without trying to run away." It is important that the students are as specific as possible so that rather than thinking, 'I'm grateful for my family,' they will think, 'I'm grateful that my family gave me a little extra lunch money today.' Continue encouraging students to think specifically about what they are thankful for each day



## 2. Discussion Time

Once a day, allot 15 minutes as discussion time where students can talk amongst themselves about what they are grateful for. Guide the conversation and ensure that it stays on track. An easy way to do this is to begin each discussion time by asking students what they are grateful for today.





## Quick Quiz

### 1. What is Gratitude?

- A.) Being thankful for the things we were given in life
- B.) Feeling upset because your friend has a bigger house than you
- C.) Wishing you had more talents
- D.) Asking your parents for money to buy new shoes, even though you have too many

### 2. How can you be more thankful every day?

- A.) Telling your friends that their life is so much better than yours
- B.) Thinking about all the rich people in the world
- C.) Wishing you were different
- D.) Appreciating what you have and not comparing it to others in a negative way

### 3. Why is it important to have gratitude?

- A.) Gratitude helps prevent the feeling of regret for the things you do not have
- B.) Gratitude helps you feel happier with your life, and the people, places and things in your life
- C.) Gratitude helps prevent feelings of envy, inferiority, sadness and hopelessness
- D.) All of the above

## Teacher Feedback

Please provide insights on any adjustments made regarding the actual use of the content above.  
Feel free to share your thoughts, suggestions and constructive criticism.  
Email your feedback to: [info@mylearningtools.org](mailto:info@mylearningtools.org)