Social-Emotional Health

Special Education Services

Gratitude Journaling for Emotional Well-Being

During stressful times, feelings of anxiety, sadness, and negativity can sneak into our daily lives and can become the predominant emotion. Intentionally focusing on and recognizing the things in our lives that make us happy and grateful can lead to a more optimistic and positive emotional state. Doing so on a daily basis can significantly improve our emotional well being. Furthermore, children who develop this practice can benefit throughout their lives.

Gratitude Journaling is a powerful strategy for ensuring that positive thoughts and gratitude are present each and every day. It can be adapted to every age and every developmental/skill level. Children with limited literacy skills may need more support, while children who have some writing skills can be encouraged to engage in Gratitude Journaling on their own. For young children, pictures can always accompany their journal entries.



To initiate a Gratitude Journal with your children, it will be important to guide them until they are comfortable with the exercise. The following steps should be adapted to their developmental level:

- Introduce the notion of "gratitude" and "being thankful" and explain the emotional benefits of recognizing the things that make us feel this way. A short story exemplifying gratitude can be helpful with younger children.
- Help your child choose a Journal (notebook) that they can personalize (e.g. picture on the cover). Explain that this is where they will write down the things for which they are grateful.
- For younger children, reassure them that this is a project that you will be doing together. You will likely have to write down their words; they might draw a picture afterward.
- Older children can be reassured that their journal entries will be private if they wish.
- Some children may need prompts to help them get started, for example:
 - Who did you have fun playing with today?
 - What made you feel happy today?
 - Who made you feel loved today?
 - Write down something nice that someone did for you today?
- As a parent, you can model this positive activity by keeping your own journal, or even journaling alongside your child.
- Finally, from time to time, go back and read the previous entries. This will surely bring back good memories and contribute to emotional well-being. *Happy Journaling!*