



SAINT JOSEPH CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL  
STRIVE  
Gratitude Activity

*You've never met an ungrateful person who was happy,  
nor have you ever met a grateful person who was unhappy.*

- Zig Ziglar

The expression of gratitude is a kind of mega strategy for achieving happiness. Robert Emmons (The world's leading researcher on this topic), defines gratitude as "a felt sense of wonder, thankfulness and appreciation for life". It is many things to many people; it is appreciation; it is looking at the bright side of a set back; it is fathoming abundance; it is thanking someone in your life; it is counting your blessings, it is savoring, it is not taking things for granted, it is coping, it is present orientated. Gratitude is an antidote to negative thinking, a neutralizer of envy, hostility, worry and irritation. Expressing gratitude is much more than saying thank you. Research has shown multiple benefits, including higher levels of "happiness", more energy, more hope, and increased periods of positive emotions. It also has been shown to increase helpfulness, empathy, forgiveness. Furthermore a person who is inclined to gratitude is less likely to be depressed, anxious, lonely, envious or neurotic. Research clearly shows you will be happier if you cultivate "an attitude of gratitude".

There are 8 main reasons for cultivating gratitude:

1. Grateful thinking promotes savoring of positive life experiences.
2. It boosts self worth and self esteem.
3. Helps people cope with stress and trauma. Expressing gratefulness during personal adversity like chronic illness or injury can help you adjust, move on, and perhaps begin anew.
4. Encourages moral behavior, especially helping others.
5. It can help build social bonds, strengthen existing and develop new relationships.
6. It inhibits invidious comparisons with others as you are more grateful for what you have.
7. It is incompatible with negative emotions, diminishing emotions like anger, greed, fear and bitterness.
8. Helps us to thwart the hedonic adaptation (our capacity to adjust to any circumstance or event). For example you may gain something in your life (like a new partner) but within 6 months your increase in happiness returns to your usual or set point. Adaptation to all things positive is essentially the enemy of happiness. However it can advance our recovery from negative events such as injury (again we tend to return to our happiness set point after the initial disappointment).

For each of the categories below, name something to be grateful for. If you have trouble coming up with something immediately, leave it blank but come back to it. Feel free to write more than one thing in a category.

Our country

Our planet

Dogs

Birds

Rainy days

Shopping Malls

Parents

My body

My book bag

Television

My name

Cars

This classroom

My hands

This school

This town/city

My neighborhood

Kleenex

Music

Movies

My brain

Paper clips

Computer Games

Cell Phones

Mondays

Sundays

Today

Right Now

Boys

Girls

Teachers

Sisters and Brothers

Sunshine

Rubber Bands