

Helping Children be Thankful

By Bright Tomorrows Staff

The holidays are a time for families, festivities, traditions, and love. It is also a time when parents can begin to notice how “stuff-focused” their children are sounding, and can start to feel like they are being run over by the commercialization of the holidays. There is no better time than the holidays to emphasize the spirit of giving and the importance of being grateful. There are some ways to help your child get into the habit of being grateful and generous all year long.

- **Talk about gratitude every day.** Pointing out appreciation for ordinary things helps the concept stick. “We are so lucky to get to see Grandma and Grandpa this weekend.” “Mr. Jones must feel really good inside when he shovels Mrs. Thompson’s sidewalk.” Another way to increase the gratitude in your house is to pick a “thanking” part of the day, whether this means talking about things you are thankful for at dinnertime or working prayer into your nightly routine.
- **Allow effort.** It can be easy to jump in and help children with tasks and activities, often by doing things for them. However, the more you do for them, the less they appreciate your efforts. Think about how much easier it is to have empathy for people working outside in the cold when you have just been outside shoveling snow yourself. By participating in simple household chores, kids realize that things take effort.
- **Give.** Help your child brainstorm some ways he or she can help someone else, even if it is simply baking cookies for a lonely neighbor. As you are making the treat or completing the activity, talk about what you are doing for the special person and how good they (the person *and* your child) will feel. This can also be a time for donation of household items or clothing to those who may be in need.
- **Be grateful for your kids.** Showing gratitude for our children models that we can be grateful for people simply being in our lives. They will learn from your example and will be grateful for you, and others, in return.

Adapted from an article titled “Teaching Children to be Grateful” by Charlotte Latvala on Parents.com. For more information about Bright Tomorrows, please visit our website at www.brightcac.org.