

Koh-Parenting Newsletter



Welcome to the Koh-Parenting Newsletter! We know co-parenting isn't easy, so we bring you this series to inform, educate, and empower you with tools and tips for your parenting journey. Join us as we discuss the issues facing today's co-parents! Check us out at kohparenting.com for more information.

Tis the Season for Thankfulness!

For many, Thanksgiving time gives birth to an intensified interest in the practice of gratitude. But have you ever asked yourself, what does being grateful really mean, and why is it important? In this article, we'll dig into the science of gratitude, how it can benefit co-parents, and how you can include it in your repertoire on turkey day and every day.

The Gist:

Gratitude is a lofty term that plays a leading role in our conversations each November. Its simplest definition refers to the state of being grateful, but put into the context of our everyday lives, it means so much more! Research has shown that gratitude can be a powerful tool with proven ability to reshape our attitude, behavior, and overall well-being. The practice of noticing and recognizing what we're grateful for shifts our focus to the positive, can pull us out of a negative mindset and turn us toward a more productive course of action. For co-parents, gratitude practice can be useful in changing our complicated family dynamics, especially when we're feeling stuck. If you can find things to appreciate about your parenting partner, you may approach your interactions with more empathy, which in turn will lead to better outcomes for your entire family. Make a point to note your gratitude as often as possible, and share your appreciation for others by offering them genuine, specific statements of thankfulness. Planting these seeds can help gratefulness grow and spread within yourself, your co-parent, your child, and everyone around you.

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THE SCIENCE OF GRATITUDE

If you've ever wished for a magic prescription to improve your mood, your health, and your relationships, look no further than a daily dose of gratitude! Scientific research concludes that gratitude impacts the brain, and the brain shapes our behavior (for more specifics, check out this [article link below](#)). Our brain makes sense of everything around us by identifying patterns, and it will seek more of whatever catches its attention. When we intentionally look for things to be grateful for, we send our mind on a mission to hunt down the good things, and consequently, it simply doesn't have as much time anymore to fixate on the negative. Through repetition, this becomes a habit, and suddenly our lives and relationships take on a more positive outlook.

HOW GRATITUDE BENEFITS CO-PARENTS:

Gratitude practice may seem like a no-brainer when you feel like things are going well for you. But if you're a co-parent who has been struggling, you may be wondering what it can do for you. In truth, gratitude is especially important when your life and your relationship with your parenting partner has been contentious. Here's why:

- Practicing gratitude shifts your point of view.** Pondering the question, "What about my co-partner am I grateful for" may evoke memories of what you appreciated about him/her prior to your separation. This may make you reflect more positively on your relationship in the past, present, and future.
- Practicing gratitude shifts your relationship dynamics.** As your outlook improves, you may approach your interactions with more empathy and patience, and when you do your co-parent may respond in kind. This shift creates a dynamic more conducive to cooperation and less conducive to conflict. Even if your gratitude doesn't inspire your parenting partner for the better, it can still benefit your relationship with others, including your child.



[Learn how to incorporate gratitude into your co-parenting journey.](#)

- **Practicing gratitude leads to resilience.**

Ultimately, much of our lives is beyond our control. Gratitude won't stop all negative things from happening, or change the attitude of others, including your parenting partner and your child. But it can have the power to shape our response to it. Regular gratitude exercise trains your brain to find the good things even in the worst of times, guiding you to the light.

- **Practicing gratitude helps your child.**

Conflict-ridden co-parenting dynamics cause stress for the entire family, including children. Kids experience trauma not only when they witness arguments firsthand but also when they sense their parents' negative opinions of each other. Their view of the world is shaped by their family unit, and when things aren't good between the two people who matter the most it shakes their sense of security. Furthermore, kids inevitably feel connected to each of their caregivers and can see themselves as an extension of both, so when they hear criticism about one parent from another they may take it personally. This can impact their confidence and their behavior. Expressing positive regard toward your child's other parent restores stability and bolsters your child's self-esteem.



- **Practicing gratitude reinforces positive behaviors.** Expressing appreciation for specific behaviors provides the positive reinforcement needed to motivate that behavior in the future. Eventually, with repetition this can lead to habit formation. For example, let's say you've been struggling with rigidity from your co-parent but recently he/she honored your last-minute request to alter your visitation/custody schedule. You could express your gratitude by saying something like, "I really appreciate that you accommodate changing our visit schedule this week. It really helped me to fit in an important meeting at work and our child appreciated the extra time with you. Thank you for your flexibility." This detailed feedback, other than simply eliciting good feelings, lets your co-parent know exactly what he/she did that you liked and how it made a difference, making it easier for a repeat performance in the future.

WE ARE HERE TO HELP

We know that co-parenting during the holidays can bring mixed emotions and challenges. We hope this guide helps you feel confident and prepared for this holiday season of co-parenting. Stay tuned for more holiday articles in the coming weeks. Check us out at kohparenting.com for more information.