

How to Incorporate Gratitude Into Your Co-Parenting Journey

It's polite to say "thanks," but in order to reap the full benefits of gratefulness, you need to dig deeper. Gratitude becomes most effective when it is a practice, a skill that you work on regularly, a way of being. Read on for some evidence-based tips on incorporating gratitude into your life and your co-parenting. This document can be used as a guide to help you on your co-parenting journey.

- **Fake it 'til you make it.** Expressing appreciation toward your co-parenting even when you don't feel like it can still have a positive effect on both of you. You need to start somewhere, and getting the ball rolling even if it seems forced at first may motivate you (and your co-parent) to do so in the future.
- **Focus on relationships over material things.** It's ok to be thankful for our material possessions- they can hold meaning and spark joy! However, expressions of gratitude over things won't bring about major life changes and they won't change your dynamic with your co-parent. Instead, to enhance your relationships, spend more of your energy appreciating the actions or qualities of others.
- **Set yourself up for success.** When considering how you can add gratitude into your routine, be realistic, recognize limitations, and choose what will work best for you. Your practice must be frequent to be successful, but the time and method is up to you. For example, you may intend to start your day by listing things you're thankful for, but if your mornings are hectic and the task adds to your stress, it's likely that you'll lose steam. Or, if your friend's gratitude meditation isn't your thing but you like to be crafty, make a "gratitude jar" instead.



- **If you see something,** say something. When you appreciate something or someone, tell them! Thinking it in your own mind creates a seed of positivity, but sharing it with someone else plants that seed so that it can grow.
- **Stay the course, regardless of others' behavior.** It's going to be hard, and you may find that your co-parent doesn't join in your positivity. But do it anyway, for your own sake and for your child. You deserve it.
- **Consider a gratitude journal.** Some form of a log or journal can prompt you to remember to engage in gratitude practice consistently. Recording your gratitude in written form creates a story of your progress, and can be motivating and rewarding to re-read in the future.



- **Be specific.** “Thank you” is a phrase that sounds good but gives very little information. Thank you for what? And why? Be sure to note exactly what quality or action you appreciate, and why. This amplifies the positive effect of the gratitude for you and for the recipient.

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Gratitude changes everything
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