

say it — now

Healthy Communication:
Strengthening Relationships
Through Gratitude

Grades 9 to 12

Your Journey with Gratitude

Purpose:

- Introduce students to gratitude and its connection to healthy relationships
- Reflect on the importance of expressing gratitude to others and its impact on well-being
- Take action by expressing gratitude to someone special

Objectives:

- Students will be able to understand and compare the meaning of gratitude and various connected terminologies
- Students will explore and reflect the connection between healthy relationships and expressing gratitude, including its impact on overall well-being
- Students will engage in gratitude-based scenario questions and identify solutions on why gratitude should be expressed

- Students will take action by expressing gratitude through creative tools and reflecting on their personal journey

Skills:



REFLECTION



COMMUNICATION
SKILLS



SELF-AWARENESS
SKILLS



RELATIONSHIP
SKILLS



SELF
MANAGEMENT

Materials:

Projector and screen or monitor; writing paper; chart paper, markers, whiteboard/chalkboard/SMARTboard

Time:

50 minutes

Investigate and Learn	Plan	Take Action	Reflect
● Learn about gratitude, what it is, why it is important and how it supports healthy relationships and well-being. ● Learn about gratitude through a diverse lens by exploring various perspectives. ● Learn about healthy relationship habits and how authentic gratitude can support it.	● Identify individuals to express gratitude towards ● Explore various creative tools for expressing gratitude. ● Plan an expression of gratitude for someone special.	● Utilize a creative tool to express gratitude to someone.	● Reflect on the experience of expressing gratitude and its impact on the self and others.

Part I Investigate and Learn

Learning Goals

- Learn about gratitude and why it is important for relationships and well-being.
- Explore various terminologies to deeply understand the meaning of gratitude.

A. Begin with a Mindful Practice

Invite students to take a short mindful break. At a calm pace, leaving some room in between statements for students to breathe and observe, read out the statements below.

*You may also choose to share an alternative guided mindfulness practice of your own preference.

- Let's begin by taking a short mindful moment.
- First, find a comfortable seat in your chair. Place your feet flat on the ground. Rest your hands on your lap.
- If it feels comfortable, you can close your eyes. If not, just look softly down towards your desk or table.
- Now, just begin by noticing how your body feels sitting here.
- No need to do anything but notice what you feel.
- Turn your attention to your breath for a few moments.
- At your own pace take three deep breaths in through your nose and slowly out through your mouth.
- Before we start our lesson today, reflect for a moment on someone important in your life.

- Perhaps bring someone who you feel grateful for... someone who supports you or has helped you solve a problem.
- Now, if you like, set an intention for today... maybe to be kind, curious or have gratitude. Choose an intention that best speaks to the attitude you'd like to have today.
- When you are ready, you can open your eyes

B. Understanding Key Terms

Let the class know that, today, we'll be exploring gratitude and how it can enhance our relationships and well-being.

First, access students' prior understanding of what gratitude, healthy relationship and well-being are. As a class begin with brainstorming by using the following questions:

- What is gratitude? What does it look and sound like?
- What is a healthy relationship? What does it look and sound like?
- What is well-being? What does it look and sound like?

Next, define the terms **gratitude**, **healthy relationship** and **well-being** as a class. Allow students to come up with a common definition of each term, in their own words. Share the following definitions once a class definition has been set.

Gratitude – the quality of being thankful and showing appreciation to something or someone through the expression of positive emotions such as warmth, kindness, generosity.

Healthy Relationship – a relationship built on trust, honesty, and quality communication where individuals feel safe, supported and cared for.

Well-being – the state of being happy, healthy, content and prosperous.

Once the class has understood the definitions of each term, invite students to work in pairs or small groups to reflect and answer the following questions:

- What is the connection between gratitude and healthy relationships? Share examples, if possible.
- What is the connection between gratitude and well-being? Share examples, if possible.
- What is the connection between gratitude, well-being and healthy relationships? Share examples, if possible.

Debrief as a class. You may highlight the following points during discussions:

- Gratitude is a form of affection that can show value and appreciation for a person.
- All relationships experience challenges and difficulties. Gratitude can counteract these negative interactions by drawing attention to what is appreciated, valued and recognized as important.
- Numerous research studies have found a connection between expressing gratitude and positively enhancing relationships, including promoting a person's overall well-being. For example, expressing gratitude can positively impact emotional and physical health by reducing inflammation, decreasing depression and improving sleep quality.

C. Exploring Gratitude and Well-being

Today, we will be exploring well-being through the lens of gratitude. We will be deepening our understanding of gratitude and its benefits, including how gratitude can support our personal well-being and well-being of our relationships.

We will investigate differences between key terminologies relating to gratitude, including what science says about the connection of gratitude and well-being.



Play the video: Kiss Your Brain from Christina Costa

After the video: Ask the class the following questions, and record on a visible platform (example: board, chart paper, Padlet, Jamboard):

- *Why do you think expressing gratitude helps shift negative thoughts and thinking?*
- *What did the speaker mean when she said, we can be grateful for unexpected challenges?*
- *Can you think of an example of an unexpected challenge that you are grateful for? Why are you grateful for it?*



Play the video: How Does Gratitude Affect Romantic Relationships? from Greater Good Science Center

After the video: Ask the class the following questions, and record on a visible platform (example: board, chart paper, Padlet):

- *Not every day can be amazing in a relationship. What are some healthy relationship habits that can maintain connection between people?*
- *Why is it important to express gratitude and make people feel understood, valued, and cared for?*

Together as a class:

Create a chart with three columns with the following labels: Action, Show and Genuine. As a class, invite students to share an action they experienced and are grateful for from the past few weeks. Next, invite students to share how they could show their gratitude for this action. Lastly, invite students to share how they would show their gratitude genuinely.

Action <i>What was the gratitude action?</i>	Show <i>How would you show your gratitude?</i>	Genuine <i>How would you express gratitude genuinely?</i>
Example: A student took time to explain an assignment to another student.	Example: I can show gratitude to this person by helping them out with the next assignment.	Example: I can genuinely show gratitude by sharing my thoughts of how they helped me and by sharing my time to help them out in return.



Educator Note:

The purpose of this challenge is to highlight moments of gratitude from our lives, including reflecting on how one can express genuine gratitude. There are no right or wrong answers here; allow students to share their thoughts freely.

The key takeaways from this exercise are:

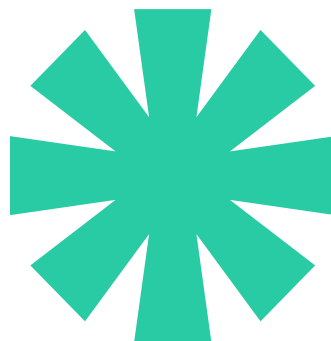
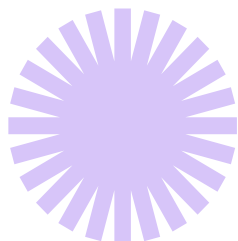
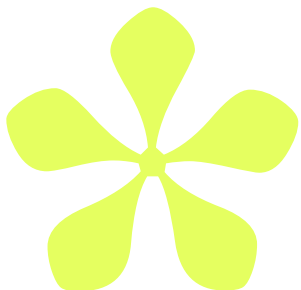
- Moments of gratitude can be any action, regardless of its size.
- Expressing gratitude is the only way for the other person to recognize that their action was meaningful and impactful for someone.
- It is critical to express gratitude genuinely which means to align all parts of the self authentically.
- If an individual does something nice out of their own will, a genuine expression of gratitude is sufficient; it doesn't mean you are now in debt to them.

Challenge:

How do you express something genuinely? Think about body language, communication, choice of words and action. Invite the classroom to brainstorm how an individual can genuinely express themselves or what makes any expression feel genuine and honest.

Highlight the following key points at the end of the brainstorming discussions:

- **Be specific about what action you appreciate.**
Example: Thank you for taking the time out of your busy day and offering your support with this assignment.
- **Use "I" statements and incorporate a "why".**
Example: I am grateful for you helping me with this assignment because I was feeling overwhelmed and wasn't sure how I would complete it.
- **Highlight what you value, appreciate and care about the person.**
Example: I am grateful that you were patient and kind in helping me with this assignment because I was feeling overwhelmed with how I would complete it.



- **Incorporate positive body language.**

Example: Add a smile, good eye contact, seek permission to share a hug, keep an open stance.

- **Use positive communication.**

Example: Use positive words such as, grateful, admire, supportive, appreciate, meaningful, etc. Be mindful of your tone, speak in soft tone, be polite and cheerful, be sincere, be open minded and understanding, ask questions for clarity or permission before taking any action.

- **Be genuine.**

Genuine expressions are important because most individuals can pick up non-verbal cues if someone is being authentic, real, and honest. Genuine expressions have a real impact and can be deeply felt.

Exit Exercise:

(Optional) To practice gratitude, invite students to make a list of four to five moments when they felt gratitude toward a specific person. Encourage students to express gratitude in those moments **ONLY** using their internal dialogue.

OR

Invite students to pick up moments between individuals where gratitude can be expressed. Encourage them to make a list of four to five moments which they observed and believe that gratitude could have been shared between two individuals. Encourage students to think of statements of gratitude that could have been shared in those events.

D. Understanding Gratitude and Related Terminologies

There are many terms relating to the word gratitude whether you are expressing it or understanding it.

Invite students to research and share the meaning of specific terms relating to gratitude. Divide the class into two to four groups, assign an equal number of terms per group, set an appropriate time that students need to research and present the meaning of the terms.

Challenge:

Encourage students to provide an example of how each term connects to gratitude.

APPRECIATION	VALUE	RECOGNIZE
CARE	THANKFUL	ACKNOWLEDGE
RESPECT	PRAISE	BLESSING
ADORE	LOVE	TRIBUTE
IMPORTANT	IMPACT	PRESENCE
MEMORABLE	AFFECTION	CONSIDERATE
INSPIRATION	GUIDE	SINCERE
KIND	STRENGTH	SAVIOR
UNCONDITIONAL	CELEBRATE	LESSONS
	CONNECTION	

E. Gratitude From Different Perspectives

Share with students that being thankful and expressing gratitude is the ability to pause to notice and appreciate the things that are heartfelt. As human beings we all want to feel important and appreciated. This is something we all share with each other despite our differences. However, gratitude can be expressed and understood differently between individuals, groups and cultures. Invite students to explore the meaning of gratitude from a multicultural perspective.

Inform students that **multicultural perspective** means viewing something through the eyes of an individual or group of people belonging to a different culture.

This view helps us understand how an individual or group of people see, perceive, understand and act through various factors that have shaped their beliefs and thinking. Our unique journeys influence how we look at the world, who we are and how we interact. We can always build understanding, collaboration and a global community through taking time to understand others because through them we can understand ourselves even deeper.

 Play the video: [Does Every Language Say Thank You?](#)

After the video: Invite students to explore gratitude from various cultural perspectives. Complete this activity by following these steps:

- Pair up students or place them in small groups and invite them to read the following article mentioned in the video. After reading the article, invite students to make notes of key points that stand out to them.

Article: [How Cultural Differences Shape Your Gratitude](#)
by Kira Newman

Link: https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_cultural_differences_shape_your_gratitude

- As a class invite student pairs/groups to share their thoughts and engage in a class discussion by answering the following questions:
 1. *What factors shape cultures and individuals' perspective on gratitude?*
 2. *Why is it important to express gratitude even if someone feels it's not necessary?*
 3. *What could be the difference between simply saying "Thank you" and expressing "deep and genuine gratitude"?*
 4. *Share your own cultural or community's perspective on expressing gratitude.*

Challenge:

Pick a culture that you find interesting and research their beliefs and ways of expressing gratitude. Share your learning by creating a video, infographic, presentation or as an essay.

Exit Exercise:

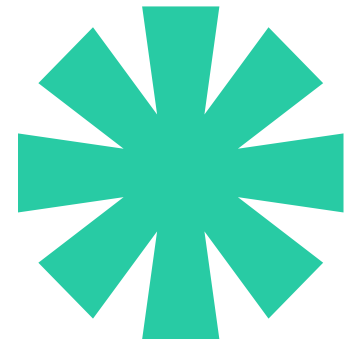
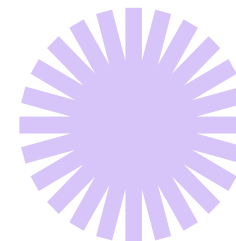
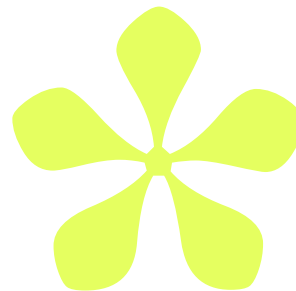
(Optional) Find a quote on gratitude from an author belonging to a different culture and share it with the class.

F. Challenging Gratitude

Share with the class that expressing or receiving gratitude can be challenging for some people. This is because our perspectives, beliefs, cultural influences and other factors help shape how we express or show gratitude in different ways.

COMPLETE the worksheet with scenario-based questions on gratitude, **Gratitude Is Important** found on page 9.

Invite students to complete this individually, in pairs, or in small groups. Encourage students to share their thoughts after completing this exercise and debrief as a class.



 Educator Note:

The purpose of this exercise is to challenge common beliefs around expressing gratitude. Expressing gratitude can be difficult for certain individuals, however shifting the mindset and the narrative we have can help us overcome these challenges. Allow students to share their thoughts freely and safely; there are no wrong or right answers. Encourage class discussions that are respectful and nonjudgmental. Support students to come up with a few responses for each scenario that satisfies your classroom.

Highlight the following points during discussions if needed:

- Gratitude is an expression, not a transaction that requires something to be done in return.
- Gratitude cannot be assumed or expected; it is something that can only be expressed.
- Expressing gratitude opens connection and builds deeper bonds.
- Gratitude does not need to be expressed all the time; it can be saved for a special moment where it can be expressed deeply.
- Genuine gratitude is not fake. It highlights what you value about the other person, how they impacted you and why you are grateful.
- We all struggle with challenges or difficulties. Expressing gratitude shows that we can support each other's growth and learning.
- Even during difficult times, gratitude can be powerful as it can shift our negative thoughts towards what is going well, what we have or what we need to reflect or change.

***"I believe in prayer.
I believe in gratitude
and serving people."***

Kiran Bedi

***"Cherish others'
kindness at heart
and pay back
the favor."***

Chinese proverb

***"One cannot
show gratitude
for blessings in
a better way
than using them
to benefit others."***

Imam Ali

***"I am happy because I am grateful.
I chose to be grateful. That gratitude
allows me to be happy."***

Will Arnett

Worksheet: Gratitude Is Important

Expressing gratitude can be difficult for many reasons. In this worksheet, there are multiple scenarios challenging gratitude. For each scenario, reflect and write statements that support gratitude and the importance of expressing it.

Scenario Challenging Gratitude	My Response to Support Gratitude is...
Sophie has a hard time saying thank you to others. She believes that if she expresses gratitude, she owes the other person a similar action or something more. She feels that a smile and being polite is enough to share her gratitude to anyone who is nice to her.	
Louis comes from a culture where families show gratitude through sharing food, spending time together and staying loyal to each other. He feels that saying his gratitude to his parents is weird and odd. He can't remember the last time his family members shared their gratitude or feelings around being thankful. Louis says gratitude is something that is expected because everyone has a role to play. He says that his family is very formal, so writing a letter of gratitude to his parents isn't something that feels comfortable.	
Líng says that expressing gratitude is awkward. They don't like the attention that it draws on themselves. Líng also struggles with expressing their feelings. They believe that expressing gratitude comes off as being "fake" as if you are expecting something in return for a thank you.	
Ayaan says that expressing gratitude shows that you are weak because you needed someone else to help you out. He feels it is important to show himself as strong, competent and smart. He feels that any form of gratitude is showing others that he needed them to be better and the only person he needs is himself.	
Olivia is struggling with different life challenges. She is having a hard time at home due to her family's financial struggles. She is feeling low, sad and defeated. She feels there isn't anything or anyone she can be grateful for because her life isn't going well. She believes that if she isn't happy and feeling positive, she cannot express gratitude.	

G. Healthy Relationship Habits

Share with the class that practicing gratitude can strengthen relationships and build healthier connections. This is because relationships with grateful individuals are happier, healthier and resilient. By expressing gratitude to others, we can show more positive behaviors in response.

It is also important for individuals to express gratitude to highlight what they value, care about and love about the relationship. Sometimes the smallest acts mean the most! Regardless of how big or small an expression of gratitude is, there are other healthy relationship habits that can support long lasting relations.

COMPLETE the worksheet, **Six Actions That Create a Lasting Healthy Relationship** found on page 11, to connect common healthy relationship habits with gratitude.

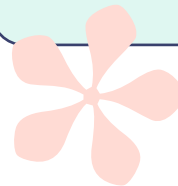
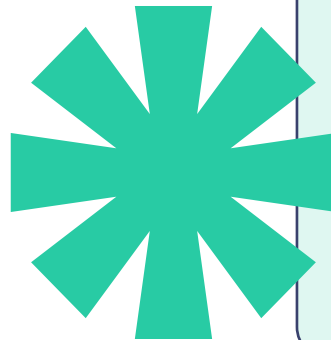
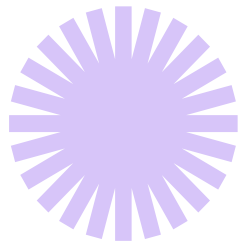
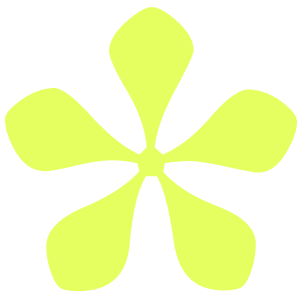


Educator Note:

The purpose of this exercise is to challenge common beliefs around expressing gratitude. Gratitude can be difficult for certain individuals, however shifting the mindset and the narrative we hold can help us overcome these challenges. Allow students to share their thoughts freely and safely; there are no wrong or right answers. Encourage class discussions that are respectful and nonjudgmental. Support students to come up with a few responses for each scenario that supports your classroom thinking.

Highlight the following points during discussions if needed:

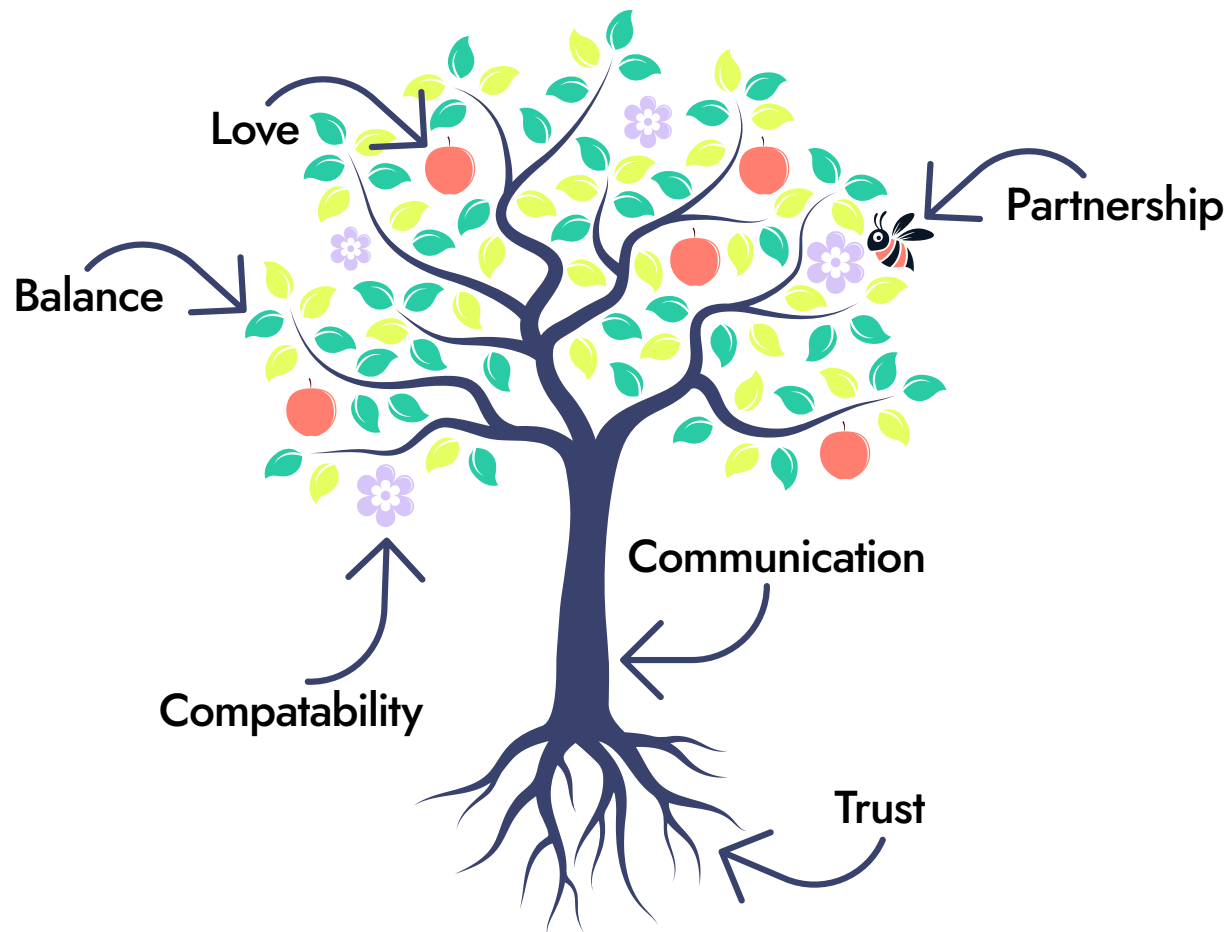
- Gratitude opens feelings of vulnerability and sharing of close thoughts, which supports the building of trust between individuals.
- Gratitude expressions are a form of positive communication, highlighting what is valued and appreciated about a person, especially on how it impacted the other. This opens communication from both sides.
- Gratitude can highlight encouragement and connection. It can show individuals what is common between each other, therefore building compatibility.
- Gratitude expression allows the other person to also share what they are grateful for. This creates a balance in conversation and expression of appreciation.
- Gratitude is key to building a working partnership that is equal and supportive.



Worksheet: Six Actions That Create a Lasting Healthy Relationship

Explore the following common actions to better understand how we can build healthy relations. Using this worksheet, you are challenged to reflect and connect how gratitude can fit with each action. Feel free to use the support of online resources or books to support your learning.

A Healthy Relationship Grows in Layers



Healthy Relationship Action	Gratitude Connection
TRUST Trust is the root of every relationship. It is having faith in a person who will remain loyal, honest and supportive in a relationship. Trust means you can rely on the person especially when you need them and are comfortable in sharing yourself safely and openly with them.	<i>How does gratitude support the building of trust in a relationship?</i> Brainstorm all the answers you can think of.
COMMUNICATION Communication is the most critical part of every relationship. Healthy communication leads to meaningful conversation, supportive resolution of problems, deep understanding of each other, progression in the relationship and alignment on relationship goals.	<i>How does gratitude support the building of communication in a relationship?</i> Brainstorm all the answers you can think of.
COMPATABILITY Compatibility is the glue that holds a healthy relationship together. It's the alignment and similarity individuals share on values, worldview, beliefs, life goals and morals.	<i>How does gratitude support the building of compatibility in a relationship?</i> Brainstorm all the answers you can think of.
BALANCE Balance is the key to a happy relationship. A relationship thrives when both individuals feel heard, valued, important and supported. Balance can shift sometimes as relationships evolve, especially in challenging times. However, a balanced relationship means both individual's interests, plans, beliefs and wants are considered and vice versa. Both individuals are taking time out to be there for each other and be involved in each other's plans and activities.	<i>How does gratitude support the building of balanced relationships?</i> Brainstorm all the answers you can think of.
PARTNERSHIP A healthy relationship is a partnership. A commitment to having ongoing and healthy relations, recognizing challenges, problem solving through difficulties, supporting each other, and having open discussions and plans on where they stand and where they want to head towards.	<i>How does gratitude support the building of partnership in a relationship?</i> Brainstorm all the answers you can think of.
LOVE Love is the fruit of any healthy relationship. It blossoms once trust, communication, compatibility and balance are achieved. It's the ultimate emotion that attracts a person to the other with deep care, connection and commitment.	<i>How does gratitude support the building of love in a relationship?</i> Brainstorm all the answers you can think of.

Part 2 Plan

Learning Goal

- Identify someone you want to express your gratitude to.

Let students know that the next step is to express our gratitude to someone special. To begin this journey, it is important to express deep and genuine gratitude. Use the following self-reflection thought-starters to narrow on a person you wish to express gratitude to.

Worksheet: Planning for Gratitude

Part A

1. Think of a moment where someone's support helped you overcome a challenge or difficulty. Using the space below, write about this person and what challenge you were experiencing.

2. Think of a moment where someone brought you great joy, happiness and filled your day with excitement. Using the space below, write about this person and the moment.

3. Think of a moment where someone supported your growth, learning and positive change. Using the space below, write about this person and how you grew from this experience.

Now pick **one** experience and person you wish to be grateful for. Write their name on the line below.

Next...

Part B

Pick 3-4 words that best describe what you admire or value about this person is. Once you have picked the words, write them on the lines below.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____



Explore positive adjective words using the following links:

<https://grammar.yourdictionary.com/parts-of-speech/adjectives/list-of-positive-adjectives.html>

<https://prowritingaid.com/art/2299/positive-adjectives.aspx>

Next...

Part C

Reflecting on your experience from part A, identify three ways this individual supported you or impacted you. Remember to be specific. Use the following questions if needed.

1. What was the challenge or difficulty that they directly or indirectly supported you through?

2. How were you feeling during that time?

3. What did they do specifically that helped you?

Next...

Part D

Write 2-3 things you want to share to express your gratitude and love

Don't forget to add these wishes in the boxes below

Use the following link to get some inspiration on writing wishes

<https://bestlovetextmessages.com/i-wish-you-peace-and-happiness-quotes>

I am grateful to: _____

I value their: _____

This experience has taught me: _____

I wish them: _____

Part 3 Action

Learning Goal

- Express your gratitude and put it into action.

Now that students have reflected on who they'd like to express gratitude to and have identified key information, they may choose their expression of gratitude.

Gratitude Expressions

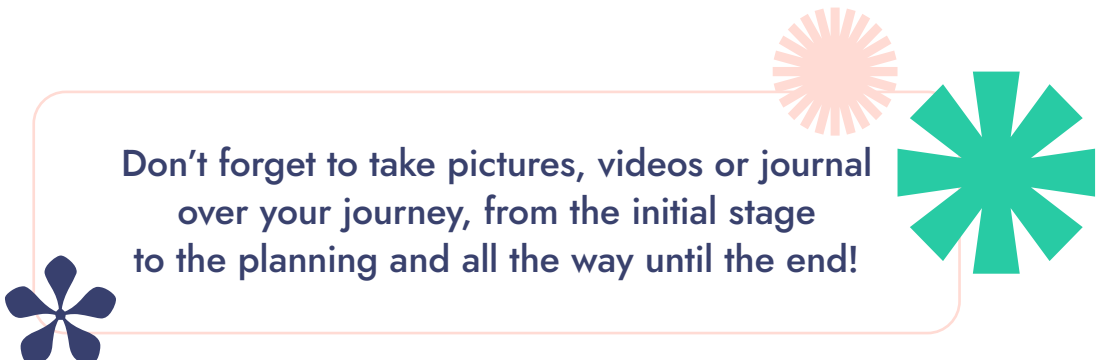
Letter of gratitude. This can be shared in person, emailed, written by hand and mailed to their home or read over the phone. If this is the chosen expression, use the following letter example to write out a letter of gratitude.

Letter example: <https://www.ginahamadey.com/blog/howtowriteagratitudeletter>

Living tribute event. This can be a gathering of others who also wish to express their gratitude to the same individual. For example, a schoolteacher, a common friend, a family member. Individuals participating in the tribute can either write a letter, poem, rap, create a presentation with pictures, write a song, make a fun

video or simply express their gratitude on the spot. If this is the chosen expression, don't forget that a tribute can be done in person or as a digital event.

In person expression of gratitude. This can be done in any way you feel works for you. Express your gratitude in words, but also use various tools like presentation slides, videos, music or art to share your gratitude in a fun way. If this is your chosen expression, be sure to share it with others to inspire them to do the same.



Don't forget to take pictures, videos or journal
over your journey, from the initial stage
to the planning and all the way until the end!

Part 4. Reflect

Learning Goal

- Finally, it is important to reflect on the experience and journey of gratitude and the strengthening of healthy relationships.

Once students have taken their action and expressed their gratitude to someone special, take some time to debrief over the experience as a class.

Begin with inviting students to freely explore the following questions:

- How did expressing gratitude make me feel?
- What was the reaction and response of the special person who I expressed my gratitude to?
- How did this experience support my well-being?
- How did this experience strengthen my relationship with the special person?
- Why is it important to express gratitude in words to others?
- What were some challenges experienced during this journey? How was the issue solved?
- What is one key takeaway about gratitude that everyone should know?

Celebrate:

- Don't forget to celebrate the journey and learning everyone has taken.
- Use pictures, videos and reflection notes as keepsakes.
- Inspire others to express their gratitude to someone special.

Next steps:

- Encourage students to consider how they can continue applying their learning.
- What opportunities does your community offer to encourage others to express gratitude?

Examples:

- Teaching others about gratitude using a social media platform.
- Having weekly gratitude reflections in class.
- Inspiring others to share their gratitude through hosting a school or community events.

