

Empathy.

Gratitude — keeping track and giving back.

This resource contains five activities built around the empathic behaviour of gratitude. The activities can be stand-alone or worked through as a series. Psychology has found that when empathy is activated, we can observe the expression of gratitude.

Empathy is: The ability to recognise another person's feelings and respond accordingly and respectfully. Understanding another's emotion in relation to that of your own. Empathy assists resilience through developing strong supportive relationships. Understanding other people's feelings / emotions / experiences is particularly helpful when people are experiencing tough times.



Gratitude.

Keeping track and giving back.

Key messages.

- › *Gratitude is being aware and appreciating the kindness of others as well as the good things in life.*
- › *Empathy is the ability to recognise another person's feelings and respond accordingly and respectfully*

Outcomes.

Students will understand that:

- i. *Gratitude is linked to developing empathy skills*
- ii. *Developing an attitude of gratitude towards people, things and events in life is an effective way to strengthen resilience.*
- iii. *Expressing gratitude can assist in improving how you feel*
- iv. *Actionable gratitude can be expressed through 'Giving Back' (paying it forward)*
- v. *Managing their own emotions and behaviours can be assisted through giving back*
- vi. *Knowing what skills are involved in expressing empathy gives people a greater ability to understand others and establish and maintain positive relationships.*
- vii. *Empathy is a set of skills that can be practiced*

Resources Required.

- › *Pay it Forward Movie short clip:*
http://teachertube.com/viewVideo.php?video_id=108000
- › *One piece of coloured paper per student*
- › *A-Z of thankful ideas student worksheet*
- › *Tracking thankful thoughts student worksheet*
- › *Thankful thoughts note student worksheet*
- › *Thx Thx Thx website:* <http://thxthxthx.com/?cat=31>
- › *Giving back – pay it forward student worksheet*

ReachOut.com link.

Fact Sheet: By learning how to have effective conversations, we can also learn how to have difficult conversations

<http://au.reachout.com/Tips-for-communicating>

Activities.

1. **Buzz Idea: Scrunch! (15 mins)** ⌚
 - i. Remind Students about the classroom being a safe and supportive environment (*more info p6 of Building Resiliency in Young People resource*)—
<http://au.professionals.reachout.com/Building-resiliency-in-young-people-resource>
 - ii. Each student receives one piece of paper
 - iii. Each student writes two things about themselves and one idea on how to help someone going through a tough time (*eg, give them a hug, ask if they are ok?, go online etc*)
 - iv. Students scrunch up the paper and throw around the room
 - v. Students move around the room and pick up someone else's paper
 - vi. Students try to find who the piece of paper belongs to
 - vii. Once each student finds the student who matches the paper, these two students form a pair
 - viii. Students discuss what the other has written in regards to how they would help someone.
 - ix. As a whole class, students offer their suggestions on how to help someone going through a tough time – write suggestions on the board



Activities.

2. What is gratitude? (20 mins) ⌚

- i. Whole class brainstorm *WHAT IS GRATITUDE?*
- ii. Write up definition on board.
- iii. Students work in pairs to complete the worksheet A–Z of Thankful Ideas
Using letters of the alphabet, write all the things you could say and do to show someone you are thankful
- iv. Share with the class
- v. Discuss as whole class: How do we display gratitude at school?
(As individuals, students, teachers and as a whole school).
Could we improve this at school? If so, how?

3. Tracking thankful thoughts journal (20 mins) ⌚

Teachers Note – This activity can be given to students to complete in their own time, or you may like to introduce to your class as a once a week activity.

Explain to students about the benefits of tracking things we are grateful for. (By tracking we start to notice what goes right as well as wrong in our lives, changing our focus to the positive not the negative. Even on a bad day there are some good things that happen, however small. It is important that we accept it, learn from it and move on with a positive attitude.)

- i. Students spend fifteen minutes completing their journal – Student worksheet template – Tracking thankful thoughts
- ii. Share with class (*this is optional*)

4. Thankful thoughts (30 mins) ⌚

Teachers Note: In a scientific study comparing five different strategies from positive psychology, the gratitude letter created the largest and most immediate effect on participants. Increasing happiness and resilience (Seligman et al, 2005)

- i. Students list two people they would like to express gratitude to
- ii. Students write down why they are grateful to them
- iii. Explain to students that they can express gratitude also through writing a short letter / producing a video or podcast for someone
- iv. Students complete a Thankful thoughts note to another person using the student worksheet – Thankful thoughts as a guide.

5. Giving Back (Pay it forward) (30 mins) ⌚

- i. Students watch short clip of the movie – *Pay It Forward* on teachertube.com (http://teachertube.com/viewVideo.php?video_id=108000)
- ii. Whole class discussion – What do they think of this idea? What things could they do?
- iii. Distribute “Giving Back” student worksheet
- iv. Students complete worksheet
- v. Whole class discussion sharing ideas from students about how they plan to “give back”

NB. The idea with this activity is that it can be an ongoing project for the day, the week, the school term or the school year.



A—Z of thankful ideas.

Fill in next to each letter of the alphabet a word or action you can do to express gratitude.

A B C

D E F

G H I

J K L

M N O

P Q R

S T U

V W X

Y Z



Tracking thankful thoughts.

Keeping a track of what things you are grateful for has been linked to increased happiness and better sleep in people of all ages.

Use the journal template below to record things you are grateful for.

Tips for completing your journal;

- i. Focus on people, rather than things
- ii. Try to record the events that you weren't expecting to happen
- iii. Try to think about at least three examples
- iv. Write occasionally, eg once or twice a week is more beneficial than writing every day.
- v. Write why you are grateful
- vi. Track your gratitude for four weeks. You may want to keep recording, or have a break and come back at another time to record your gratitude. It's up to you!

What am I thankful for?	Why am I thankful?
1	
2	
3	

What am I thankful for?	Why am I thankful?
1	
2	
3	

What am I thankful for?	Why am I thankful?
1	
2	
3	

What am I thankful for?	Why am I thankful?
1	
2	
3	





Thankful thoughts note.

Write a letter, create a video or a podcast to let someone know that you are grateful to them. The format you use is completely up to you.

For short, online examples, head to the Thx Thx Thx website: <http://thxthxthx.com/?cat=31>

Use the following template to help you create your Thankful Thoughts note

---thanks!---

1. Who is the note for?

2. Why you are writing / doing the video / podcast?

3. What are you grateful for?

4. Describe how their behaviour benefited you and what you learnt.

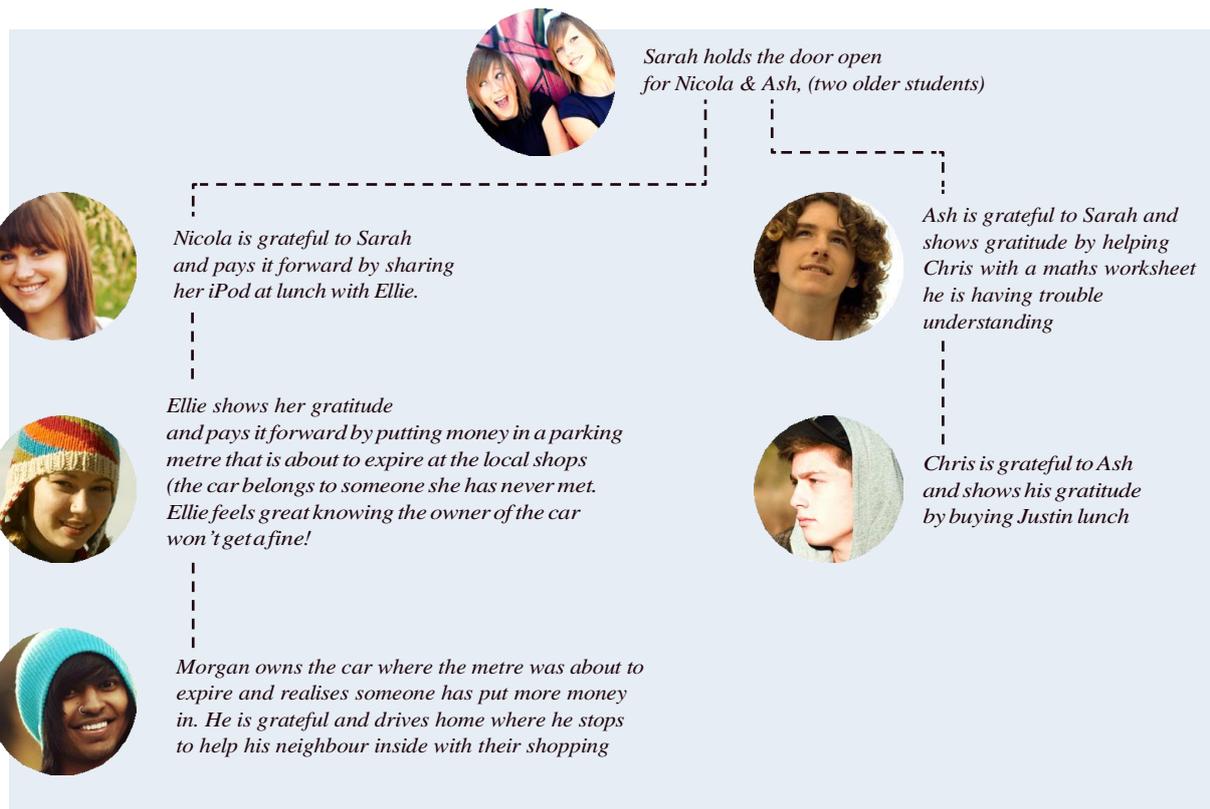
5. Deliver the letter and read it out aloud, or send the video or podcast to the person

NB – If not reading a letter aloud, or someone is seeing or listening to a recording of the Thankful Thoughts Note, follow it up with a phone call or a personal visit (this can be the most difficult part, but the most beneficial)



Giving back — Paying it forward.

What if you did something for someone and how they showed you they were grateful was to do something for someone else? It could look something like this:



Giving back, or paying it forward is a great way to work on your empathy skills and an awesome way to pass on gratitude. Why does it work?

- › It makes us focus on other people
- › It's about giving rather than taking
- › It creates happiness for both you and the other person

Here are some ideas for giving back

- › Help someone with their homework
- › Compliment a stranger
- › Leave a copy of a book you have enjoyed in a café for someone else to enjoy
- › Hold the door open for someone
- › Buy someone lunch
- › Give up your seat on a bus or train

- › Tidy someone's desk for them
- › Collect cans of food for a homeless shelter
- › Organise a class fundraiser – eg a lunchtime sport competition with the money raised going to a local charity

How will you let people know about "Giving Back?"

- › Create a sticker to give to people or leave where you have done the good deed
- › Create a card to give to the person you do a good deed for so they can pass the card on to someone else as they do a good deed for them
- › Organise a special "Giving Back" day, week or month at your school
- › Present at a school assembly to introduce the idea and challenge each student to "pay it forward"

References.

Barnard, Julie (2009) The Positive Psychology of gratitude <http://ezinearticles.com>

Seligman, M. Steen, E. Park, N & Peterson, C (2005) Positive psychology progress:

Empirical validation of interventions. American Psychologist, 60(5), 410-421.

