

RAISING KIDS WITH CHARACTER

Questions to foster the experience of gratitude

By Andrea Hussong

Here are some examples of NOTICE-THINK-FEEL-DO questions parents may ask children to help them more deeply notice what they have received and make sense of those gifts through their thoughts and feelings.

NOTICE: *What have you been given or what do you already have in your life for which you are grateful? Are there gifts behind the material gifts for which you are grateful, like someone thinking about you or caring about you enough to give you the gift?*

THINK: *Why do you think you received this gift? Do you think you owe the giver something in return? Do you think you earned the gift because of something you did yourself? Do you think the gift was something the giver had to give you?*
If you answered no to these questions, you may be more likely to be grateful.

FEEL: *Does it make you feel happy to get this gift? What does that feel like inside? What about the gift makes you feel happy?* These questions help the child connect their positive feeling to the gifts that they receive in their lives.

DO: *Is there a way you want to show how you feel about this gift? Does the feeling you have about this gift make you want to share that feeling by giving something to someone else?* Prompting children after experiences of gratitude in order to motivate acts of gratitude, whether they be acts of appreciation or paying it forward, may help children connect their experiences and actions in the world.

We think that these types of questions may help children to more deeply receive gifts from others or notice what they already have. In turn, we think that deeply receiving may motivate acts of gratitude toward others. And that will give parents reasons to feel proud of children who not only say thank you unprompted but, more importantly, mean it.

Andrea Hussong is director of the Center for Developmental Science and a professor of psychology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She studies how interactions between parents and kids can foster gratitude.

Reprinted with permission from UC Berkeley's Greater Good Science Center; <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu>