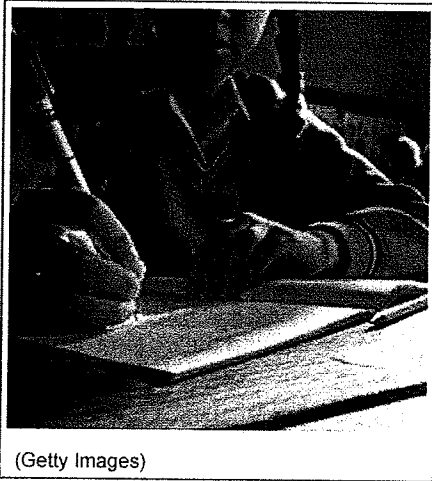




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## Do your kids need an 'attitude of gratitude?'

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(Getty Images)

By Leanna Landsmann

*Q: Our once sunny 14-year-old daughter is developing a "bad attitude." She is sullen in school and whines about everything. While we're not rich, our home is stable and we have a lot to be thankful for. The school counselor sees no learning or peer problems. She suggests that we help her develop a sense of gratitude. Would that really help her?*

**A:** The "**gratitude attitude**" could bring her optimism back – and do much more, say psychologists who study the relationship between positive thinking and achievement. A true grasp of gratitude could help her become more emotionally, physically and socially successful throughout her life.

Research has shown that people who experience gratitude experience more joy, love and happiness, and less bitterness, envy and resentment, notes Dr. Karen Reivich, co-director of the Penn

Resiliency Project and a leader in depression prevention. They may even have better physical health. Reivich coaches parents on raising positive kids at [fishfulthinking.com](http://fishfulthinking.com).

Reivich, Dr. Jeffrey Froh of Hofstra University and Dr. Robert Emmons of University of California at Davis, are doing exciting work, says California educator Marissa Gehley, founder of *KNOW (Kids Need Our Wisdom)*. "When teens learn to appreciate what they have, they're less likely to be depressed and isolated. There is even research to suggest that gratitude and higher GPAs go hand in hand because being grateful leads to more pro-social behavior and greater satisfaction with school. All this makes sense to me."

The National Association of School Psychologists believes gratitude has a strong positive impact on kids' psyches. It recently launched the "Gratitude Works Program" to help develop students' optimism. ([nasponline.org](http://nasponline.org)).

So how do you teach gratitude? **Don't preach. Model grateful behavior** in your daughter's presence, says Gehley. "Let her see you thank the store clerk for carefully scanning all your coupons so you could realize savings," suggests Gehley. "Stop to watch a gorgeous sunset on the way home from soccer to show you're grateful for nature's gifts. Let your daughter see you take coffee cake to the mechanic who fixed your car without charging you."

**Use "thankful" words** with your children each day such as "We're fortunate to live in this warm home." "Your smile this morning is such a gift!" "We are so grateful that Grandpa Greg is out of the hospital." Find ways to incorporate thankful gestures in your routines, ranging from thanks at mealtime or bedtime, to texting a "thanks" to your daughter for folding the laundry.

**Let folks hear your thanks.** Have your daughter call Aunt Tammy to describe the fuchsia leg warmers she bought with the money she sent. Model how to thank her social studies teacher for allowing her to do an extra credit report to bring up a grade. Walk across the street to thank your neighbor for rescuing your express mail from the rain, suggests Gehley. "Be emphatic about expressing thanks so your daughter learns the art of being grateful."

**Keep a family gratitude journal.** If you count your blessings every day for all to read, your daughter will see just how little things add up to make a happy life.

*Do you have a question about your child's education? E-mail it to [Leanna@aplusadvice.com](mailto:Leanna@aplusadvice.com). Leanna Landsmann is an education writer who began her career as a classroom teacher. She has served on education commissions, visited classrooms in 49 states to observe best practices, and founded Principal for a Day in New York City.*

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