



FEELINGS OF GRATITUDE

"Walk together. Feel the heart beats. Experience the presence. This is how to be thankful."

—Amit Ray

OVERVIEW

Students practice observation skills and identify the emotions related to gratitude.

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- Anytime during the year

TIME REQUIRED

- 30 minutes

LEVEL

- Upper Elementary

MATERIALS

- Sticky notes or index cards
- Pencils
- Whiteboard and marker

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Practice observation skills
- Identify the emotions related to gratitude

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

- [Making Practices Culturally Responsive](#)
- [Adapting Practices for Students with Special Needs](#)
- [Making a Practice Trauma-Informed](#)
- [Making Classrooms and Schools Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered](#)

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Awareness
- Social Awareness

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

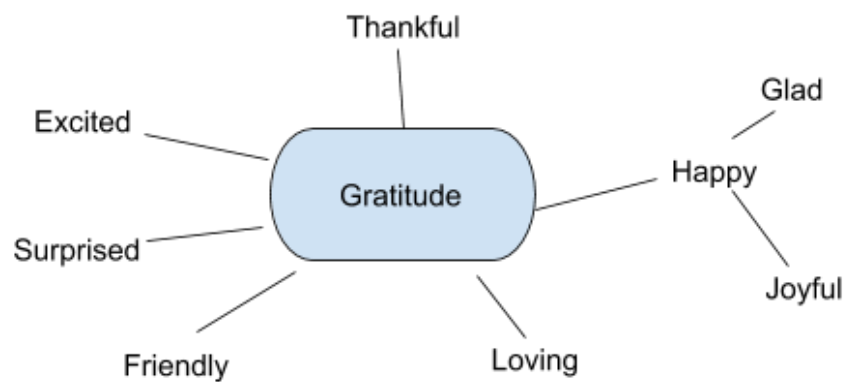
- Find a partner and decide who will go first. The first person thinks of something they are grateful for -- who was there, what happened, how did it feel. The other person observes the first person's body language, facial expression, breathing, etc. Switch roles. After, discuss how this exercise made you each feel, naming any emotions that came up.
- Cultivating our observational skills of others' social and emotional cues is critical to healthy relationships and our own well-being. For example, while observing carefully, we can see non-verbal cues to what others are feeling. And the ability to notice the actions of others, helps us to actually feel gratitude for those particular actions that benefit us.

INSTRUCTIONS

THE PRACTICE

- Divide the class into pairs. Ask students to decide who will be person A and person B. Give out an index card or sticky note and a pencil to each person -- explain that this activity has two parts, and that person B will use their card and pencil in the first part; person A will use their card and pencil in the second part. Then give instructions as follows:
 - Person A thinks for one minute about a time they felt gratitude toward another person; if Person A likes, they can close their eyes while doing this. Encourage students to think about where they were, who they felt grateful to, what the person did that made them feel grateful, how they responded, and any other feelings they had about this person -- without speaking.
 - While A is visualizing this, B observes their partner very carefully. On the card, B writes anything that they notice changes about A -- for example, changes in facial expressions, how their hands are being held, movements in the shoulders or anywhere else, how they are breathing, etc. B writes their observations on the card, along with any words that B thinks describe the feelings that A might be having.

- After one minute, ask students to reverse roles, so that A is the observer, and B visualizes a time they felt gratitude.
- After the second round, have students share with their partners their observations, and the feeling words they came up with.
- Bring the class together and make a "Gratitude Web." Write the word "Gratitude" in a circle in the center of the board.
- Ask the class to share the feeling words that they wrote during the partner activity, and any others that come up. As they name feeling words, draw a line from the word "Gratitude" and write the feeling word, creating a web of words. Try to cluster similar words together as you write. (Some students may mention feeling words that describe the person they visualized -- this is fine, just try to cluster those words together.)
 - Sample Gratitude Web:



- Finally, ask the students:
 - *What do you notice about the words?*
 - *Why does gratitude bring up these other feelings?*
- Use this as a chance to point out that we feel grateful when other people do things that have made our lives better in some way, large or small. With older students, explain that we feel grateful when others do things that benefit us.

Note: While most of the words in the web are likely to express happiness, appreciation, love, etc., it is possible that the visualization may bring up other feelings as well. For example, a student who feels grateful for the kindness of a grandparent who has recently passed away may feel sadness come up while remembering their kindness. If this comes up, be sure to acknowledge the sadness (or fear, worry, or whatever emotion the student might mention), without pushing the student to focus on gratitude instead. It may be a time to introduce the idea that we can feel more than one feeling at the same time. For example, in this scenario, a teacher might say, "I'm so sorry that you lost your grandmother. This must be a very sad time for you. I can see that remembering her brings up sad feelings, as well as all the loving feelings that you are grateful for."

CLOSURE

- Ask students to reflect on the experience of trying to read another person's emotions. Was it easy? Challenging? How accurate were they in naming the person's emotions? Why do they think it might be important to be able to read someone's emotions?

EXTENSIONS

- Post the Gratitude Web in the classroom and encourage students to add words as they continue to learn about gratitude. These words can be used in writing activities.

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

How easily were students able to read each other's facial and body expressions? Did students come up with a variety of emotions? Do students need additional opportunities to practice identifying emotions in others?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

Scientists have discovered that [emotions serve specific purposes](#), such as providing information about ourselves, and shaping our relationships with others, in groups, and in society. Indeed, one correlational study with mainly middle class, white undergraduates found that the [ability to recognize emotions](#) in another person's face and voice was related to increased relationship well-being and lower depression.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Providing opportunities for students to practice reading another person's emotions, whether through facial expression or body language, helps them to develop their social awareness skills, which in turn cultivates healthy relationships--a critical key to building positive classroom and school climates.

SOURCE

"[Nurturing Gratitude From the Inside Out: 30 Activities for Grades K–8](#)" was originally developed by [The Inner Resilience Program](#), in partnership with the Greater Good Science Center and the John Templeton Foundation.

For the entire curriculum, [click here](#).