

CapKids Thanksgiving

Traditions or holidays can be a great opportunity to give space for meaningful connection and reflection as a family. We wanted to invite your family to not just talk about gratitude, but find ways to practice it. We identified 3 ways you could approach Thanksgiving as a family by: noticing goodness, expressing gratitude for others, or finding good in the midst of hard things. One of these 3 may stand out more than the others, and I would encourage you to **pick one theme** and **choose one activity** that would work best for your family to do this weekend.

Noticing Goodness

Thankful chain (Ages 2-5)

Write or draw things or ideas that you are thankful for on strips of paper. Glue them in interconnecting rings to make a chain of all the things you are thankful for. This can be done individually or as a family.

Gratitude journal (Ages 2+)

A simple tradition you can implement where each person writes what they are thankful for in a book you pass around every Thanksgiving. If a child has not yet developed writing skills, their response can be transcribed for them. This could be great if you want to have a keepsake or include extended family.

Thankful Jar (Age 5+)

For an allotted time period (i.e from Thanksgiving to Christmas) recall and write down joyful moments on slips of paper, fold them and put them in a jar. Then, after the time period is up, you can gather around and remember all the good things that have happened.

Favourite part of the day (2+)

Take time to gather around and share the best parts of your day with each other. Express gratitude for the best moments of your day. They don't have to be momentous, they can be simple occurrences such as a compliment from a friend, winning a game, or sharing a yummy snack with a sibling. I find this works well over dinner time discussions.

Expressing Gratitude for Others

Writing notes (5+)

Practice gratitude for others by writing and leaving notes for those whom you are thankful for. Focus on admirable character traits and how this person affects you positively.

Writing a thank you card to friends or family (2+)

Thank you cards can be just because! Take the time to tell the people in your life why you are thankful for them by making and writing a card to let them know how important they are to you.

Praying (2+)

Practice praying thanks. A good prayer for young ones is simply giving thanks for what you have. For example:

Dear God,

Thank you for _____.

I am grateful for _____.

Help me to _____.

Amen!

Journaling gratitude (6+):

Grab small notebooks for each person participating. In the journal, outline and discuss what you are grateful for. By noting what you are grateful for, you can gain clarity on what you want to have more of in your life, and what you can do without. A gratitude journal is for the writer's eyes only, so they can write anything they feel without worrying about judgment from others. On days when you feel blue, you can read through your gratitude journal to help to remember what to have gratitude for.

Finding Good in the Midst of Hard Things

Consolation /desolation (4+)

Recall a situation where you felt joy and closeness to God (consolation) and a time when you felt sad or distant from God (desolation). We can learn more about our feelings and how there is both consolation and desolation present in many situations.

Prayers of lament (2+)

Take a second to pray to God in a time of difficulty, recognizing His presence with you. For younger children, pray over them about something that they are having a hard time with, acknowledging their struggle and God's presence. Here are some possible examples of prayers you could use or meditate on:

Kate Bowlers Blessing for the resilient:

Blessed are you who are tired
of feeling grateful all of the time.
who feel more comfortable
with moments of rage and negativity
and venting all that you lost.

Blessed are you when you say,
hand on your heart,
That there are truths
you wish you could unlearn
Riches you wish you could get back
The innocence, hope,
the sweet fearless of never having lost.

You are resilient...
but I wish you never had to be.

Your survival cost you.
And it's okay to name it.
To be grateful AND outraged.

You might never get

the apologies you're owed.

We long to hear them say it.
I'm sorry. I should have believed you.
I should have sheltered you.
This never should have happened.

The almost truths are difficult to swallow.
Yes we learned so much.
Yes we overcame.
We grew.
But this perspective....
we would give it back.
In a heartbeat.

Bless us God, in our gratitude.
In our anger. In our survival.

And may you, my dear,
be met today with gentleness
And stillness and peace,
Energy, momentum, or rest.
Whatever it takes to carry the weight
of all this resilience.

A Prayer for an upset child by Traci Smith

God I don't feel happy today

I'm sad

I'm mad

I'm tired

Be near to me as I breathe in and breathe out

I feel fresh air in my lungs.

I know these feelings won't last forever.

I pray they soon fade away.

In and out I breathe

In and out I breathe

Hard feelings don't last forever.

Painted Rocks (taking something hard and making it beautiful) (2+)

Use rocks to symbolize a situation or time that was hard and painful. Use paint, glue and glitter, paint pens or bright markers to make them beautiful. Recognizing that the God of the universe is constantly making things new, even the hardest and most difficult things.

Fortunately and Unfortunately (4+)

This storytelling game acknowledges that there are two sides to every coin! One person starts by saying "fortunately..." and a scenario that at first appears good. The next person follows with "unfortunately..." and a reason why the scenario may not be as good as it initially appeared. The story continues with people using 'fortunately' and 'unfortunately' to carry on the drama. For example

Person 1: Fortunately, it was a beautiful sunny day.

Person 2: Unfortunately, it was sooo hot and sunny everyone in the town got totally sunburned.

Person 3: Fortunately, aloe vera gel was on sale at the local store.

Person 1: Unfortunately, the store owner was so burnt, the store wasn't even open.

Person 2: Fortunately, the whole town could alleviate their pain in the cold water streams that ran through the town.

Etc.

You get it.

Books That Cover Thanksgiving and Themes of Gratitude

You Hold Me Up by Monique Gray Smith, illustrated by Danielle Daniel

A Small Kindness by Stacy McAnulty, illustrated by Wendy Leach

Harvest Days by Kate Depalma

Keepunumuk: Weeâchumun's Thanksgiving Story by Danielle Greendeer, Anthony Perry, Alexis Buntun

We Are Grateful: Otsaliheliga by Traci Sorell and Frane Lessac (gratitude throughout seasons)

Thankful by Elaine Vickers and Samantha Cotterill

Saturday by Oge Mora (gratitude for what you have even when things go wrong)

Daniel's Good Day by Micha Archer (finding joy in and with others)