After the death of a loved one, many people find it difficult to be thankful. A death can bring waves of sadness for a family, often making gratitude seem out of reach. Children may have an especially difficult time with this, as they can feel a lot of guilt and resentment toward the person who died, and they may think there is nothing left to be thankful for. However, as family members begin to accept the reality of the death, it is important to find ways to be thankful for all of life’s blessings. In fact, being able to connect to what is good in life is a great coping skill for children and adults alike, as it can help build hope for the future. Gratitude has also been linked to better psychological health, which in turn leads to better physical health. Lastly, if your children learn to practice gratitude, they will carry that lesson with them throughout their lives and be able to pass it on to friends and family in the future. Consider these suggestions when helping to develop gratitude in your children.

• **Model gratitude.** One of the easiest ways to teach your children to be grateful is to model it yourself. Children learn more from being shown what to do than from being told what to do, so act how you want your children to act. Try keeping a gratitude journal or coming up with a list of things you are grateful for every day. Modeling gratitude can even be as simple as remembering to say “Thank you!”.

• **Share responsibilities with your children.** No matter their age, children can almost always help out around the house, whether it’s sweeping the floor, setting the table, or making their bed. By helping with chores, they are learning the value of work and can learn to appreciate the effort involved in certain responsibilities.

• **Make gratitude a part of your daily routine.** Consider having your children name one thing they are thankful for as part of their everyday activities. Whether they ponder this over breakfast or you discuss it with everyone at the dinner table, have them reflect on their lives with appreciation. Or instead of asking them “How was your day?”, change that question to “What did you appreciate most about your day?”

• **Look for ways to give back to your community.** Doing volunteer work with your children can help them see the needs of others and encourage appreciation for what they have. Another option may be to have your children pick out clothes and toys that they have outgrown and donate them to a charity.

• **Read stories about gratitude.** By occasionally switching out your children’s bedtime fairy tales with a book about gratitude, they can more easily relate to the concept and learn new ways to show thanks. The Further Reading recommendations listed in this handout include children’s books on gratitude that are available from our Lending Library.

Talk to your children’s teachers to see what lessons they teach on gratitude, because you may be able to get some more ideas from them. Although the methods will vary greatly by developmental stage, all children can benefit from learning a little about being thankful. Gratitude is a lifelong asset.

**Further Reading:**

- *The Thankful Book* by Todd Parr
- *When I’m Feeling Kind* by Trace Moroney
- *The Two-Hearted Numbat* by Ambelin and Ezekiel Kwaymullina
- *Healing Your Grieving Heart* by Alan D. Wolfelt
- *The Grief Recovery Kit* by Tanya Kilgore
References:


Parents, setting a positive tone about chores, can help to develop character and responsibility. The Benefits of Chores Setting the Tone Allowance Summary. The Chore Conflict. Just wait a minute. By the age of three, youngsters can be assigned their own tasks, for which they are responsible, such as pulling up the sheets on their bed or placing the napkins on the table or sorting the laundry. The size of the task does not matter; the responsibility associated with it does. Assigning Chores. I sweep the floor, tidy my room, clean the shoes, dust the furniture, make food myself and do every kind of work. It's not easy to do every kind of work at home, but I can learn to do everything myself. When I do my household chores well, everybody in the family is happy. If I have a holiday party at home, I can help my mother and grandmother a lot. How happy mother is to see everything bright! It's a nice present for my parents to tidy the house! It's wonderful to make people happy! There is a lot of work in our garden and I help my parents to do it. We must do our household chores, because if we hadn't done it our flat would look like a trash can. I usually clean my flat on Friday. First of all I clean with duster table, piano, some boxes, TV, lamp and many other things. Also, it will make sure that the only time your bed isn't made is when you are sleeping in it. Your bedsheets should be washed every couple of weeks, so make sure to strip your bed when your parents ask to make sure they stay clean. Sort your clothes. You can also look up proper ways to set the table or fold napkins for something nicer and more creative to look at. After meals are over, you can also be helpful by clearing the table. Get all the dishes and silverware into the sink or dishwasher for cleaning. Do the dishes. Sometimes helping around the house means helping your siblings with homework or projects. This is a nice thing for you to do for them, and it gives your parents time to do other things. Do things around the house without being asked to do them.