

Dear parents and carers

Welcome back to term 2. Many of us are not in the typical place we usually are after a two-week holiday break and may be experiencing a host of negative emotions including stress; anxiety and heightened irritability. With all the tragedy occurring in the world at the moment, it is easy to get consumed by lowered optimism and be less available to those we love.

Decades of research have shown that expressing gratitude is linked to lowered stress, depression and anxiety levels; better physical health, sleep and concentration; improved immune functioning; higher levels of optimism and enhanced personal relationships. Right now, is the perfect time to intentionally promote positive emotions and gratitude is a particularly potent one to harness.

Gratitude is the ability to notice and focus on the good things that are happening in your life right now. Even though there is undoubtedly a plethora of negatives out there, there are positives, and gratitude is a critical ingredient in our recipe for coping with the stress of these times.

Research shows that by engaging in gratitude rituals you not only become conscious of just what is positive in your world, but you actually create more and more positive experiences to be grateful for.

So how do we practice gratitude, and how do we get our kids to notice the many small good things that are happening to them each day despite these big life disruptions that they can be thankful for.



There are a range of different techniques available for adoption. Oprah Winfrey is a great advocate that being aware of what you're thankful for includes taking the time to think about your experiences and recommends writing them down.

Others also suggest gratitude photographs (you could do this on a shared WhatsApp chat if you have older children) or a gratitude jar.

Professor Lea Waters suggests using the acronym WWW - What Went Well. She recommends this exercise be done as a family at dinner time or bedtime, where you ask your children "What went well for you today?" Their responses are going to be varied – they may recall a great conversation with a friend; mastering a new e-platform they are using for school; or even reaching a personal best on a running time or teaching your pet a new trick.

Waters also recommends a gratitude graffiti board for more spontaneous (and visible) heartfelt thank-you's. This white board needs to hang in a shared living space which allows you to jot down what you're grateful and validates the thoughtful actions of family members for on the board as they occur.

It is not about ignoring the difficulties you are going through, but being able to sit alongside those struggles and acknowledging that there are all these really great moments of good.

Wishing you all the best,
Michelle (Turner School Psychologist)