

GRATITUDE AND KINDNESS HELP CHANGE THE WORLD

Expressing gratitude may be one of the simplest ways to boost your wellbeing!

Gratitude has powerful physiological effects on the brain and body. Gratitude can help us feel more positive emotions, savour good experiences, improve health, deal with problems and build strong relationships.

When you express or receive gratitude, dopamine is released, making a connection between the action and feeling good. Dopamine is also the main player in the brain's reward and motivation system, so when we are feeling more grateful we are more likely to make more progress towards our goals!

Expressing gratitude regularly as a family helps us to train our brains to shift to a positive mindset, maintaining a healthier and more optimistic perspective. Sharing gratitude as a family helps to forge stronger bonds, greater trust and increases empathy. Focusing on what is good about our lives can also provide a counterbalance for when we feel things aren't going so well. Helping children develop an attitude of gratitude is an important part of parenting.

There is a positive relationship between kind, helpful behaviour and feeling grateful. When we are grateful we are more likely to be kind. Being kind to others and understanding the feelings of those around us are basic skills for emotional intelligence. Compassion and empathy can be developed through mindfully practising acts of kindness. Studies have shown that our brains are rewarded for altruism with a release of dopamine during acts of kindness.



We feel good about doing good!

We also need to remember to be kind to ourselves. Self-compassion is important. Parenting is a tough job! Kristen Neff, who is widely recognised as one of the world's leading experts on self-compassion, outlines three elements of self-compassion:

- Self-kindness – recognising the importance of treating ourselves like we would a friend. Giving ourselves a break and taking care of ourselves.
- Common humanity – understanding that we all struggle with difficult times, no one is immune from it. We're in this together!
- Mindfulness – being aware of our feelings and accepting them for what they are without judgement. Knowing that thoughts, and feelings come and go.

