

Feeling Gratitude: A Relaxation Practice for Families and Individuals

Robin Gregg, School Counselor, Antrim Elementary School and Pierce School

As we enter the holiday/Christmas season, a simple relaxation practice, focused on gratitude, can remind us of the commonality of all humans and the values that unite all religions. For a great resource about one value shared by religions throughout the world: The Golden Rule by Ilene Cooper with illustrations by Gabi Swiatkowski New York: Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2007. This is a book that I have used in classroom counseling lessons in the past.

The following relaxation/visualization was adapted from *Yoga4Classrooms* (Dover, New Hampshire) and can be used individually or with your child(ren):

Find a comfortable sitting position. Close your eyes and begin to notice your breath, breathing normally. You can ask your child how to do balloon or belly breathing if you would like to begin with a calming breath (or two or three).

Think about a time when you felt very thankful, grateful or appreciative. Perhaps someone did something really thoughtful for you or for your family? Maybe you noticed something small or large that reminded you about your good fortune? Maybe you are especially grateful for a friend, a family member, a co-worker, a neighbor?

How does gratitude make you feel? Notice how your body is feeling as you focus on your thankfulness, appreciation or gratitude. Notice your thoughts as you continue to think about the person, place, experience or thing for which you are grateful.

Imagine that this feeling of gratitude is filling your heart with love, warmth, peace and happiness. Imagine that your heart and body are being flooded with feelings of gratitude and thankfulness.

Sit with this feeling for a few minutes, breathing normally, and noticing your feelings and thoughts. As your mind wanders, return to thoughts of a person, place or thing for whom or for which you feel grateful.

After a few minutes, take a long, slow, deep breath and exhale slowly and calmly. Open your eyes. Notice how you feel. Enjoy the feeling and repeat as often as you wish!

Additional ideas:

Make a drawing or painting representing your feeling of gratitude.

Write about your feeling of gratitude.

Express your gratitude in words, a picture, a thank-you card or an action.