

Grow a gratitude tree - Gratitude

EXPLANATION:

Thankfulness is a socio-emotional habit that young children explore from an early age. Creating a gratitude tree helps young children express appreciation for the people and events that influence their lives. By understanding thankfulness young children can build sensitivities towards the feelings of others, develop empathy and other life-skills.

YEAR LEVELS: Prior to school

STUDENT GROUPING: Whole group discussion – individual creations to add to the gratitude tree

ACTIVITY LENGTH: Group time discussion and individual creations

LINK TO CURRICULUM:

Early Years Learning Framework:

Learning Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity

- 1.2 Children develop their emerging autonomy, inter-dependence, resilience and sense of urgency
- 1.3 Children develop knowledgeable and confident self-identities
- 1.4 Children learn to interact in relation to others with care, empathy and respect.

Learning Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world

- 2.3 Children become aware of fairness
- 2.4 Children become socially responsible and show respect for the environment.

Learning Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing

- 3.1 Children become strong in their social and emotional wellbeing
- 3.2 Children take increasing responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing.

Learning Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators

- 5.1 Children interact verbally and non-verbally with others for a range of purposes
- 5.2 Children engage with a range of texts and gain meaning from these texts
- 5.4 Children begin to understand how symbols and pattern systems work.

SCOPE OF TASK

1. Explain to the class that we all have reasons to be thankful and for these we say, 'thank you'. We may be thankful for our families – for feeding us, reading us stories, taking us to the park. We may also be thankful for what we have in our environment – the sunny day, the weather, the trees for giving us shade. There are many things that we have gratitude for!
2. Ask the children to share the reasons that they say, 'thank you'.
3. Discuss with them different words that are similar in meaning to 'thankful' and for which they would say 'thank you'.
4. Examine feelings and reasons for 'gratitude' and 'appreciation'.
5. Show examples of 'gratitude trees' made by other children – a Google search will discover a range of examples
6. Tell the children that they are going to make and 'grow' a class 'gratitude tree'.

Your options (dependent upon developmental stage of class):

- The children determine how the tree will look and the materials needed
 - Materials are sourced and ready for students to build their class tree
 - A bare tree is already 'assembled'
7. Once the tree structure is determined, the children can make the leaves. A template for a leaf is attached or allow the children to make their own leaf shapes and cut them out.
 8. Depending on the group - either act as scribe or model writing for something that children express gratitude for and this can be put on the leaf. Attach strings to leaves for students to tie their leaves on the tree.

The gratitude tree can be a feature in the classroom and be added to when someone feels thankful. The gratitude tree can also be shared with parents/caregivers and other visitors to the room. Questions that could prompt conversations include:

- How do people feel when we say thank you?
- How do you feel when you share your gratitude?

Alternative: Have magazines available for children to find and cut out pictures representing gratitude. It is important for them to be able to explain why they wish to use a particular image.



RESOURCES

Recycled materials for tree:

- tree branches
- rocks to add stability to the tree
- old vase or bucket to hold the branches
- leaf template
- paper
- string to hang leaves
- hole puncher
- internet to share pictures of gratitude trees.

