



GRATITUDE ACTIVITY FOR TWEENS & TEENS

Lesson 3

Seeing The Good In Others

Students discuss what gratitude means and why it is important.

Time Required

1 class period

Grade Level

6th – 12th grade

Materials

- [Lesson 3 PowerPoint slideshow](#)
- Post-its for every student
- *Go Out and Fill Buckets* handout for each student OR for Middle School *Growing Up with a Bucket Full of Happiness* by Carol McCloud
- Students' strengths posters from Lesson 1

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Understand the importance of being specific when grateful (e.g., we are thankful to someone for something)
- Understand gratitude as an intentional act
- Appreciate each other for qualities or actions reflecting our character strengths

SEL Competencies

- Social Awareness
 - Recognizing individual strengths
- Relationship Skills
 - Cultivating connection and friendship

**Getting Ready
For This Activity**

Educators:

Think about a time when someone filled your bucket (brought you joy) or when you filled someone else's. How did it make you feel?



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Seeing The Good In Others

How To Do It

Slide 1 Introduce the Lesson

Gratitude Activity
Lesson 3

See The Good Challenge

Let's learn what gratitude is and why it can make us feel better.

- Introduce the lesson.
 - *Today the focus is on expressing gratitude, but let's start off with a quick review...*

Slide 2 Expressing Gratitude

Gratitude Activity
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Expressing Gratitude

Gratitude is a social glue; it holds relationships together.

- If you like, ask a few volunteers to share something they wrote in their gratitude journals for homework.



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Slide 2

Expressing Gratitude (cont'd)

- Tell students:
 - *Expressing gratitude, or saying “thank you,” is critical for relationships. It helps each person recognize the other person’s efforts and makes the other person feel appreciated. When we express gratitude, we communicate to the important people in our lives how they matter to us AND, over time, we get closer to these people because they help us reach significant goals in our lives. It’s glue for who and what matters!*

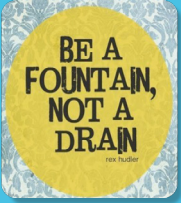
Slide 3

Gratitude Is A Choice


Gratitude Activity
Lesson 3

Gratitude Is A Choice

You choose how you think.
It's your choice to focus on good things or bad things in life.



You also choose how you act.
It's also your choice whether you want to do things that lift others up or bring them down.



- Do the following quick experiment:
 - *Look around the room for 20 seconds to find all the blue things that you can see... (wait 20 seconds).*
 - *OK, what did you see that was green? After students point out that you said 'blue', reply: "But you looked around, right? So why can't you tell me what was green?"*
 - *This illustrates how we expand what we focus on in our minds, while everything else (the green) fades away. Our brains rewire this way!*



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Slide 3

Gratitude Is A Choice (cont'd)

- Then explain to students:
 - *It's important to realize that you choose how you look at life and what focus you can take throughout the day.*
 - *You can spend all of your time and energy thinking about all the things that go wrong in life, looking at people's negative characteristics, and doing things to feel better about yourself at the expense of others.*
 - *Or you can choose to appreciate all the good things that you have in your life, recognize people's positive characteristics, and do things that make others feel better about themselves.*

Slide 4

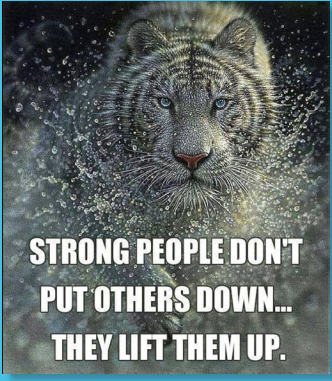
Bucket Filling (Part 1)

Gratitude Activity
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"Bucket Filling"

Things that lift others up (or "fill their buckets") include:

- Being friendly
- Expressing gratitude
- Complimenting them on their strengths/talents
- Encouraging them to pursue goals
- Showing compassion



- Read either the "Go and Fill Out Buckets MS-HS" handout or McCloud book on Bucket Filling.
 - *Having our buckets full not only makes us happy. It also makes us strong because it's like having a tank full of gas. With full buckets we keep trying new options to solve problems rather than quit, we can keep going rather than give up. A full bucket feels good now, but keeps us strong when we need to be, too.*



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Slide 4

Bucket Filling (Part 1) cont'd

- Ask students for examples of ways people have filled their buckets. Discuss with students:
 - *These are special people who CHOSE to be nice to you. How do they make you feel? Do they make you feel grateful? You, too, can CHOOSE to appreciate these special people in your life.*

Slide 5

Bucket Filling (Part 2)

Gratitude Activity
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"Bucket Filling"

Practice expressing kindness towards your classmates.

You can:

- Tell them thank you for doing something kind for you
- Compliment them on one of their strengths or talents
- Commend them for a behavior that exemplifies one of their character strengths



- Now it's time for students to fill each other's buckets. Introduce the activity during which students will leave post-it "Thanks" that acknowledge/compliment others' character strengths on their posters.
- Teachers should first share their own strengths poster.
 - *You may all know about this strength of mine, but maybe you didn't know about this one. What are ways you've noticed them? (Be sure to thank students who offer ideas.)*
- Provide some examples of post-it thanks that acknowledge others' strengths:
 - *Thanks for helping me carry my project into school. You showed kindness.*
 - *I appreciate your jokes yesterday. Your humor helped pick me up. Thanks.*



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Slide 5 Bucket Filling (Part 2) cont'd

- *Thanks for your help on the assignment. You showed teamwork.*
- Challenge students to look for the good in others by acknowledging each other's strengths. (Note: To make sure that each student gets something written about him or her, you can have students draw names or turn to a neighbor on one side.)
 - *This helps us appreciate the gifts we all have to share and the good qualities of friends.*
 - Allow students several quick occasions to fill buckets to cultivate a sense of connection to peers and to improve classroom climate.
- Introduce the homework, which is to write about and thank people who noticed or supported a strength or talent of yours.
 - *Write about a time when someone did NOT notice you or a talent of yours. How did that make you feel? Then write about a time someone DID notice you or a talent of yours. How did that make you feel?*
 - **Make and share** a thank you card with a person who noticed you or your talent (mention **WHAT THIS PERSON DOES THAT MATTERS PERSONALLY** to you, the person's **EFFORTS ON YOUR BEHALF**, and **HOW THIS PERSON'S BEHAVIOR MAKES YOU BETTER**).

Reflection After The Activity

- Ask students to reflect on how it felt to have someone acknowledge their strengths and to acknowledge another person's strengths.
- Students might also identify one person in their lives whose "bucket" they would like to fill sometime in the next 24 hours.

Go Out And Fill Buckets

Ideas about Bucket Filling from “How Full is Your Bucket” by Tom Rath and “Growing Up with a Bucket Full of Happiness” By Carol McCloud

You can read excerpts from the book or the entire book, but here is the main idea.

- **The Theory of the Dipper and the Bucket.** Each of us has an invisible bucket. It is constantly emptied or filled, depending on what others say or do to us. When our bucket is full, we feel great. When it’s empty, we feel awful. Each of us also has an invisible dipper. When we use that dipper to fill other people’s buckets - by saying or doing things to increase their positive emotions – we also fill our own bucket. But when we use that dipper to dip from other’s buckets – by saying or doing things that decrease their positive emotions – we diminish ourselves as well. Like the cup that runneth over, a full bucket gives us a positive outlook and renewed energy. Every drop in that bucket makes us stronger and more optimistic. But an empty bucket poisons our outlook, saps our energy, and undermines our will. That’s why every time someone dips from our bucket, it hurts us. So we face a choice very moment of every day: We can fill one another’s buckets, or we can dip from them. It’s an important choice – one that profoundly influences our relationships, productivity, health, and happiness. (p.15 How Full is Your Bucket)
- **Go out and fill buckets.** Give compliments to people, encourage them. When you are at school, look around and see if there is someone who looks like he or she may not be having a very good day and do something nice for that person, such as inviting him or her to hang out. Try each day to fill other people’s emotional buckets.
- **Avoid taking from another person’s bucket.** We take from others when we criticize or bully them or do anything else that brings someone down rather than builds him or her up. Those who have a need to take from someone else’s bucket are really just trying to fill their own empty bucket!
- **Fill a bully’s bucket, too.** Those individuals who take from others (bully, criticize, or treat negatively) are the people who usually need the most bucket filling. They are lacking love and acceptance in their own lives. Unfortunately, treating others negatively never gives us what we are lacking. According to Carol McCloud, we can never fill our own buckets by taking from the bucket of another person. Even though it feels like someone doesn’t deserve it, do something to fill this person’s bucket by

Go Out And Fill Buckets

giving him or her a compliment, smile, or some other positive gesture that helps everyone feel better.

- Remember your loved ones. What about filling the buckets of people we know and love? What kinds of things can we do for our parents, siblings, and friends to show them how special they are to us? Doing this really makes you think about how much your loved ones do for you and how much they mean to you. Carol encourages us to think of more gestures we can make to show them how special they are. What can you do to fill the buckets of your loved ones?