

## **Thanksgiving: Thankfulness Starts at Home**

**By**

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**Q.** Is there a way to make the traditional “giving thanks” and “being thankful” more meaningful to children?

**A.** “Acknowledgement” and “recognition” are two tools for showing your children how thankful you are for them. From there, teaching “thankfulness” becomes much easier.

Because of the hectic pace of life, it is easy to overlook the many wonderful contributions your child makes to your family daily. That makes November the perfect time to make an extra effort to acknowledge your child for who he is and what he does. In addition, you can find many ways to recognize specific actions that you might otherwise have overlooked.

### **Acknowledgement**

While you should reserve praise for major accomplishments, you have opportunities everyday to encourage your child day in and day out. You can do this by noticing and then pointing out simple actions that you might not otherwise have noticed. Whenever your child hears your acknowledgement, he has an automatic internal positive response to it. This response is inner praise. Here are some examples of how it works.

Parent: "You are sitting up straight."

Child: "Good for me."

Parent: "You put all your books away."

Child: "Good for me."

Parent: "You ate all your spinach."

Child: "Good for me."

The list of actions you can notice is endless. The more you look for them, the more you can find. Even a poorly done paper with 5 misspelled words has 5 words spelled right. Math problems fit this pattern as well. With your encouragement comes inner praise, the most valuable praise of all. The more your child is aware of his or her successes, the more he or she will continue to succeed in the future. Success breeds success.

## **Recognition**

There is a way to extend acknowledgement to the level of recognition. After you point out a positive action, you can follow it with a short description of what the action represents. Here are some examples.

Parent: "You brushed your hair. That makes you look pretty."

Child: "Good for me. I look pretty"

Parent: "You folded all your shirts. That makes them look better on you."

Child: "Good for me. My shirts look better."

Parent: "You held the door open for your brother. That was thoughtful of you."

Child: "Good for me. I am thoughtful"

It may take some practice to become proficient at providing this kind of input. However, once you get used to it, the positive phrases should flow. As you continue to express your acknowledgement and recognition to your child, you send clear messages of thankfulness. These messages lay the groundwork for your child's first being able to understand "thankfulness" and then being able to give it. As an outwardly thankful parent, you instill an inwardly thoughtful child. This year as you continue to show positive awareness of your child, the food on your table, and your secure lifestyle, a thankful child just might not be far behind.

Happy Thanksgiving to you and your family!

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