

Gratitude Tree

Intro/Instructions:

- Today I will be introducing the Gratitude Tree. First, I'm going to go over a little background about the important role gratitude can play in our daily lives and review some of the research. Then, I will explain what the Gratitude Tree is and how we are going to use it.
- In recent years there has been an increase in the research surrounding gratitude and appreciation and the positive effects it can have on our lives. Gratitude can help us feel more satisfied with our life. It can strengthen our sense of joy and social connection, improve our relationships, promote forgiveness, help us cope with adversity and even fortify our immune system.
- We all know that what we think affects how we feel (both emotionally and physically). So if we increase our positive thoughts, like gratitude, we can increase our subjective sense of well-being, as well as objective measures of our physical health.
- In addition, a daily discussion of gratitude can result in higher levels of alertness, resiliency, enthusiasm, determination, energy, and sleep duration and quality. Grateful people also report lower levels of depression and stress, although they do not deny or ignore the negative aspects of life.
- In recent years, studies on gratitude among youth suggest that it fosters more positive emotions and better attitudes toward school. In fact, the science of gratitude is now reaching a point where researchers are no longer just defining gratitude and identifying its benefits but determining the most effective ways to cultivate it.
- On that note, now that we have a little background about gratitude, let's learn how to use the Gratitude Tree.
- There are gratitude trees set up around the room. As you can see, the trees are a little barren right now and we are going to help fix that.
- On your table, you will see post-its shaped like either leaves or apples. Sometime throughout the day, you will use the post-its and write down things that you are grateful for and put them up on one of the trees.
- We don't want to limit your thought process, so this can be anything that you are grateful for or appreciative of- it could be something that happened here today, it could be related to a family member or someone in your life that has had a positive impact on you, it could be something someone said or did for you at work, or something as simple as being grateful for the lovely Fall weather.
- As the day passes, we will watch the trees fill up and blossom from our notes of gratitude and appreciation. Then to wrap up the activity we will read aloud several of the notes and share them with the group.
- Feel free to leave your note anonymous or you can put your name on it, whichever you prefer.
- In taking part in this activity today, we not only hope to boost enthusiasm and positivity, but we also hope that you will take this idea back to your districts, schools, classrooms, and homes and share it with others.

- We encourage you to take pictures of the trees or take notes about the activity so you can try this exercise again. We also encourage you to brainstorm other ways to further incorporate feelings of gratitude and appreciation into your daily life.
- Thank you!