



Exploring Leadership

PERSONAL LEADERSHIP: GRATITUDE

We often say “thank you” because we’ve been taught it’s polite or because it feels like the right thing to do when someone helps us or gives us a gift. But there’s more to gratitude than manners. From a scientific view, gratitude isn’t just a response to kindness. It’s a powerful emotion with real benefits for both the giver and the receiver. One researcher explains it this way: “Gratitude is an emotion we feel in response to receiving something good which is undeserved.” In other words, gratitude helps us feel connected, humble, and more aware of the good around us.

CONVERSATION STARTERS:

When was the last time you said the words “thank you”? Now think a little deeper—when was the last time you really meant it? Not just out of habit, but because you truly felt thankful?

Gratitude isn’t just about saying thanks—it’s about truly noticing the good in people and everyday moments. And it turns out, gratitude is good for you. People who practice it often feel happier, sleep better, and manage stress more easily. A grateful mindset can lift your mood and improve your life.

EXPLORATION ACTIVITY:

This activity helps us recognize how much we take everyday meals for granted—and invites us to feel real gratitude for simple things.

FACILITATOR TIPS:

- Use the activity time to reflect on mindful eating, gratitude, and the meaning of sharing even a simple meal.
- Don’t heat the beans or use a bowl. Keeping it simple strengthens the message.
- Be mindful of dietary needs or sensory sensitivities.

KEY OBJECTIVES:

- Explore and build a genuine sense of gratitude.
- Reflect on past moments of gratitude and recognize what you may be taking for granted now.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Cans of beans that are safe to eat without heating
- Can openers (if needed)
- Spoons

- Give each participant a can of beans and a spoon.
- Say: “For this activity, your meal is just beans. No sides, no drinks, no dessert—just the can and your spoon.”
- Ask them to open the can and eat straight from it using only the spoon.
- If someone doesn’t want to use a spoon, they can eat the beans with their fingers instead.
- While they eat, explain: “This activity is powerful because it’s simple—no prep, no cleanup, just basic nourishment.”
- Remind them: “Many people don’t have access to warm, comforting meals. Even choosing not to eat, knowing food is waiting at home, is a privilege.”
- Talk about how we often overlook the variety and comfort we enjoy at mealtime.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- What can we be thankful for—even in a cold can of beans?
- How would it feel if this was your only meal, every single day?
- What do you usually expect at mealtime without thinking twice?
- What other things in your life might you be taking for granted?

APPLICATION DISCUSSION:

- Why does having gratitude matter in everyday life?
- What's the difference between someone who lives with gratitude and someone who doesn't?
- How can practicing gratitude help you with school, friendships, or family life?
- Who could you thank today for something small, but meaningful? How would you do it?



CONCLUSION:

The purpose of this gratitude exercise is to help you recognize and appreciate what's already in your life. Think about the food you eat each day—fresh, processed, cooked, and delivered from all over the world. If you've never worried about where your next meal is coming from, that's something big to be thankful for. But it doesn't stop there. Every day is full of things we often overlook. Taking just a few minutes to notice them can shift how we feel.

Grateful people enjoy stronger relationships, better health, more self-control, and more peace. Building an "attitude of gratitude" starts with one small habit: looking for the good and choosing to see it.

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REFERENCES

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