

Entitlement -vs- Gratitude

"In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God" 1 Thes 5:18

PLEASE NOTE:

While much of the information in this edition of our Toolkit is directed towards today's youth, please do not assume that the issue of entitlement only applies to them.

Basic Entitlement is Natural

We are all born with an expectation of receiving our parents' care. That is to say, we are all born with a certain sense of entitlement. However, if a child does not learn lessons of gratitude and how to regularly practice it in their life, personal and destructive patterns of entitlement will only increase.

Youth today are growing up with a false sense of entitlement and are oppositional to responsibility and ownership over their values, decisions, goals and relationships. Left unchecked, they will become short sighted, self-centered and unable to connect between effort and reward.

ENTITLEMENT: Belief that a person has a right to or is deserving of a specified privilege, benefit or reward.

The real danger of this pattern continuing into adulthood, is that entitlement simply DOES NOT lead to happiness.

On the contrary, it leads to feelings of disappointment and frustration. When an individual has a false perception of unmet needs, is constantly wanting for more or continually feeling they deserve certain things – unhappiness

becomes the only constant.

The universal antidote to this pattern, is in fact, gratitude. While many search high and low for other remedies or explanations, it is gratitude that serves to keep in check a growing sense of entitlement. Gratitude is the most consistent element helping individuals experience more happiness and satisfaction with their lives and less of a sense of entitlement.

Simple Signs of Entitlement in Your Home

No participation in Chores

Household tasks are a reasonable expectation for any family member in any circumstances. Learning early and often to participate to make the home a better place for everyone is simply part of being a member of the family. Constant conflict in the home around this issue should be taken seriously.

Rules Simply Don't Apply

Part of living in a family and in society involves complying with numerous rules. Parents should endeavor to make rules clear, consistent and communicated regularly. If opposition to family rules, or rules in general continues, the root cause may be entitlement.

Expectation of All Things NOW

Materialistic children very often have a strong sense of entitlement. Parents should endeavor to have frequent and explicit discussions with their children regarding work, saving money and the purchase of items "needed" versus "wanted". Without these discussions, entitlement is fed by a constant want for material things.

In This Edition:

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- A Unique Time & Challenge
- Expressing Gratitude
- Many Sizes

Who is West Ridge Academy?

- Gospel Centered
- Spiritual Based
- Youth Residential Treatment
- Helped over 25,000 youth and their families
- Established in 1964



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Parents & Teenagers— A Unique Time and Challenge

All parents often need to be reminded that as our children grow and develop into teenagers, one of their unique developmental tasks is to individuate. Said another way, to break away from adults and become independent individuals.

One main goal for youth, whether they acknowledge it or not, is to get parents to recognize and acknowledge them and their new independence and wisdom. Herein lies the gratitude dilemma. When a teen follows the sometimes constant counsel of their parents to be more grateful, to show gratitude more readily, a teen, in effect is setting themselves up to stay beholden to their parents. Often times this simply doesn't feel good. This is not to say that parents should cease teaching our teens to be less entitled or to feel and express more gratitude. It simply means we need a good strategy and we need to stick with it.

4 Ideas Toward Helping Youth Express Gratitude

1. Emphasize Service

Studies consistently show that youth who are involved in serving others, even as little as 1 hour per week are less likely than other youth to be involved in selfish and destructive behaviors. This includes behavior such as smoking or drug and alcohol use. The data also indicate that individuals who serve others consistently rate their lives happier and more content than those who do not. If we want our youth to feel less entitlement, less selfishness... have them serve others. If we want our youth to feel

more gratitude for the things they have and for the people they are... have them serve others.

2. Take Advantage of Hard Times

As youth experience challenges and hard times, it is a perfect opportunity to cultivate a mindset of gratitude and to teach them that trials are a part of life. Encouraging youth to process and reflect upon difficult experiences fosters growth and can create greater personal insight into a more grateful mindset. The goal here is to help youth recognize that "because of X happening, Y then becomes an opportunity". While this is not always clear in the moment of difficulty, it is often a great teaching opportunity for parents to help youth see the other side of hard times.

3. Seek a Cadence

When teens feel genuinely grateful, it is a positive feeling for them, just like it is for everyone else. When they create for themselves a regular routine of gratitude, it will become more and more habitual and take on a rhythm of its own... or a cadence of gratitude. Even those who struggle at first can find a rhythm and blossom into appreciative and grateful young adults.

4. Recognize That One Size Doesn't Fit All

A consistent practice of gratitude, if viewed as an assignment or chore, will be much less effective. Helping a teen design for themselves ways to increase their gratitude and decrease their sense of entitlement will often generate the best results. Acknowledge

that each youth is blessed with different gifts and talents, strengths and weaknesses. It has often been our experience that their inclusion in this process will not just increase its effectiveness but often surprise you.

Youth have always, quite naturally, struggled with and for their autonomy. This also means struggling with feelings of entitlement and gratitude. The role of parent and leader is to help our teens gain constant insight into themselves, including what they feel grateful for, and to help them discover what they really want for themselves and what makes them happy. As we recognize the signs of entitlement in our children and take the necessary steps to help our children overcome those tendencies, they will be more prepared to face the future with a heart full of gratitude.