Inner Explorer
Beyond The Program for Teachers
December 2016



# **Gratitude**



## Dear Teachers,

Inner Explorer would like to wish you the happiest and healthiest of holiday seasons and thank you again for what you do every day for kids. Your profession is truly a noble one. As a way of expressing our gratitude, we have created a 7-minute Holiday Mindfulness track for you to enjoy. It's available on our website at www.InnerExplorer.org. This Holiday Mindfulness track is available to anyone so please forward to parents, fellow teachers and other friends and family. Share the joy and give 7 minutes of bliss to those around you!

Do you remember why you entered the teaching profession? Consider taking a few moments before reading the rest of this to think of one of your own favorite teachers and why that teacher was your favorite. How did that teacher make you feel? What was it that you loved about that particular educator? Before moving on, perhaps you can, with a little smile, thank that person and fill your heart with gratitude.

Now, think about your own strengths. List three of them in your head; three reasons you might be one of your kids' favorite teachers. Stay with those feelings and notice the happiness in your heart.

Now remember a particular time when you were really impactful in the classroom. Perhaps you created a fantastic lesson. Perhaps you negotiated a difficult interaction between two kids. Maybe you conveyed to a parent the strengths of a child that was having a difficult time. Take a few moments to remember the pride you felt because you are a great teacher. Where do you feel that pride in your body? What does it feel like? Are you smiling? This might be a memory you can come back to when things aren't easy in the classroom.

When there is so much to do, being grateful for ourselves may not appear to be such a worthy endeavor. However, during these holidays take the time to appreciate yourself, both inside and outside the classroom. You may be surprised at what you find and how it makes you feel!

All of us at Inner Explorer wish you the happiest and healthiest of holidays.

#### Activities for Inside the Classroom and Outside the Classroom

- Ask kids to think about a friend they have that means a lot to them. Ask them to identify three reasons why that friend is important. Ask them to recall when they were a good friend to someone else. Have them write about their memory.
- Encourage your students to create a gratitude journal. Have them spend one minute each day, at the same time writing things for which they are grateful. Do this for ten days in a row.

After practicing this for ten days, give them an in-class writing or drawing assignment inviting them to notice what it feels like to practice gratitude and if anything has changed in their lives as a result.

- Have your students read quotes about gratitude. Have them choose their favorite and write or draw about it. Invite students to share.
- 4. Give students five minutes to practice mindfulness and being present. (Make it shorter depending on the age of the kids). When the timer goes off, ask them to look around and name 5 things in the classroom for which they are grateful. Do a group share at the end.
- 5. Break kids into groups of two and have them tell each other two things for which they are grateful. Then have them switch partners. Do this five times and each student will have been told ten things about themselves that people like. Have each student write down the three things they most enjoyed hearing.

## Neuroscience of Gratitude

### Published by Psychology Today in November, 2012

A National Institute of Health Study in 2009 (Zahn et al) found that those who practice more gratitude had higher levels of activity in the hypothalamus influencing metabolism and stress, and resulting in better sleep and less depression. Gratitude also activated brain regions associated with dopamine, a neurotransmitter that makes us feel good. Since our brains submit to confirmation bias, looking for things to prove what they believe to be true, the more good we identify, the more good we seek to identify. Gratitude deserves to be practiced all year round. To read the entire blog, please go here: <a href="https://www.psychologytoday.com/.../201211/the-grateful-brain">https://www.psychologytoday.com/.../201211/the-grateful-brain</a>

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