

Cultivating An Attitude of Gratitude



Maren Schmidt, M.Ed.

KidsTalk
ONLINE WORKSHOPS

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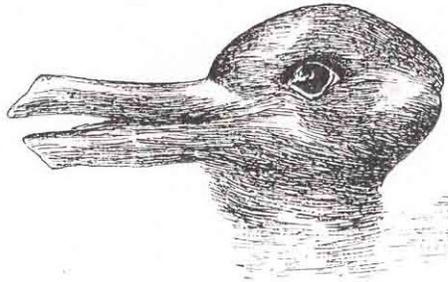
A few years ago a friend of mine with young children asked my advice about how to help her children appreciate the good life they had, a life full of love and comfort.

She told me that when she looked at the ads of children in magazines, the models looked bored and pouty.

- How, she asked, do I avoid raising children like that?
- How do I help my children understand and count their blessings?

I'll share two ideas I suggested to her.

The first is about the importance of focus. I'm going to show you a picture.



What do you see? Some people see a duck. Others see a rabbit. And some people can see both a duck and a rabbit.

What this picture of the duck and rabbit shows us is this:

In most situations there are different ways to see things.

WHERE we place our focus changes our perception. Is the picture of a duck or a rabbit? It depends on where we place our focus.

In working with our children, WHAT we focus on in our day-to-day routines can shift our perceptions from seeing behaviors as a nuisance to seeing the same actions as a blessing.

We need to guard against what Dr. John Gottman calls in his book, *The Relationship Cures*, a “crabby habit of mind”.

A crabby habit of mind occurs when we focus on the negative in a situation and neglect to see the positive.

Need I warn you that our attitude, what ever it is, is contagious!

With all the worries we have in our lives, children, spouses, jobs, family, and more, it can take a conscious effort to shift our perception to the positive, the beautiful, the good and the blessings in our relationships.

To refocus, we need to look carefully and find that positive aspect of our situation.

Duck or rabbit, positive or negative, remember, they are both there.

When we find ourselves in a crabby habit of mind we can begin to refocus by finding and sharing five bits of sincere appreciation every day with the people who earned it.

When we find ourselves being critical of others:

We can stop, and shift our focus to find reasons to value them.

Even though we might feel criticism is justified, when we express appreciation, we model to our children and others how to find the value in their own lives.

Here are some qualities we can find to appreciate:

loving, intelligent, strong, energetic, persistent, funny, gentle, kind, relaxed, beautiful, calm, tender, careful, strong, interesting and helpful.

Instead of thinking...

I wish he'd calm down and go to sleep, practice saying:

I appreciate your energy.

Won't she stop ever asking questions:

I appreciate your curiosity.

Won't he ever stop clowning around:

I appreciate your trying to make everyone laugh and be happy.

Here's my second suggestion.

For those days that crabbiness takes over an entire house, I recommend that you get out and *take a thank you walk*.

When appreciation has flown out the window, go on a walk and look for it!

Take your children on a walk and express thanks for items you come along in your journey. I invite you to model gratefulness and challenge your children to look at the world with eyes of thankfulness, from the rain, to rain boots, to the leaves turning brown, to flowers blooming.

After your walk draw pictures with your children. Make a list of all your

thanks filled findings. Place your drawings and list in a prominent place to remind everyone to express gratitude.

If you find yourself in a crabby habit of mind:

- Shift your focus to the blessing instead of the criticism.
- Look for the positive, knowing full well that there are always negative aspects in any situation.
- Find qualities to appreciate.
- When you find it difficult to offer appreciation, go out on a thank you walk.

What you feed grows, so acknowledge positive qualities and ignore unwanted behaviors as long as no one is hurt.

As you find qualities to be thankful for in your children and others, you will cultivate an attitude of gratitude in yourself, in your children, in your family and beyond.

Let's put this into action!

What are going to do to cultivate an attitude of gratitude?

For more put-it-into action ideas:

Head on over to <http://MarenSchmidt.com> where you have lots of resources available as a Kids Talk Reader.

References:

The Relationship Cure: A Five-Step Guide for Building Better Connections with Family, Friends, and Lovers

by John M. Gottman

Duck/Rabbit Picture: "Duck-Rabbit illusion". Licensed under Public domain via Wikimedia Commons - http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Duck-Rabbit_illusion.jpg#mediaviewer/File:Duck-Rabbit_illusion.jpg