

# IMPORTANCE OF EMPATHY AND GRATITUDE FOR YOUTH

**Empathy** is the ability to understand and share the feelings of others. Empathy allows us to respond with compassion by putting ourselves in another person's shoes. Taking the time to understand someone's perspective teaches us to be openminded to the feelings and viewpoints of other individuals.

**Gratitude** is a feeling of happiness that comes from being grateful for someone or something in your life. It allows us to view the world through a positive lens and respond with kindness, warmth and appreciation. Gratitude has a positive effect on mental health and well-being. When you share or express gratitude to other people, it benefits them, but it also benefits you!



## Why should youth practice empathy and gratitude?

- Develop awareness and listening skills
- Learn the value of being selfless and helping others
- Foster positive relationships with others and strengthens existing ones
- Increase ability to deal with conflict
- Boost feelings of positivity and appreciation
- Improve physical health, mental health and wellbeing
- Increase the ability to deal with challenges and stress
- Build resiliency

## Practising empathy and gratitude

- Practise being Kind
  - **B** - Buy a meal for someone in need
  - **E** - Express a smile to someone who is sad
  - **K** - Keep it simple, be respectful and say thank you
  - **I** - Introduce yourself to a new student at school
  - **N** - Notice a positive quality about a friend and give them a compliment
  - **D** - Donate gently used clothing items, books, or toys you no longer play with
- Set aside a few minutes each day for a daily *gratitude moment*
- Encourage youth and participating household member to share 1 to 2 things they are grateful for
- Incorporate gratitude moments into regular parts of your day (e.g., dinner time, during a walk, bedtime)

### PUBLIC HEALTH

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[york.ca/HealthySchools](http://york.ca/HealthySchools)

- Be creative; express gratitude by drawing a picture of what you're grateful for or writing it in a journal
- Gratitude jar: Encourage your child to write notes saying what they are grateful for and add them to a jar



## Resources

- [School Mental Health Ontario: Empathy](#)
- [School Mental Health Ontario: Acts of kindness](#)
- [School Mental Health Ontario: Expressing Gratitude](#)