

# COUNSELING CORNER

## Monthly School Newsletter from Lutheran Counseling Services

### Resilience Building

For the 2020-2021 school year, Counseling Corner will focus on **RESILIENCE!**



### Car Conversations



*In the car, classroom or dinner table, try some of these ideas to promote resilience in yourself, your family or your class.*

◆ As a family or a classroom, select an item to serve as a gratitude anchor. You will write on or fill up this item with examples of things each family member or classmate is grateful for. Members write (or draw) something they are grateful for on the pumpkin, on leaves, or on slips of paper that go into a jar. At the end of the month (or when having a hard day) the family or class can review all the things that each member is grateful for.

## The Greatness of Gratitude

In a month where we give thanks and focus on what we are grateful for, we might wonder if these practices have any impact on building our resilience. Science tells us that they do! In a recent study from Georgia Southern University, researchers demonstrated that participants who completed a gratitude exercise after a positive experience increased their resilience and coping skills as a result.

When digging a little further, we see that both groups increased their positive emotions after the positive experience (no surprise here). But the gratitude group's positive emotions increased even more after they completed the gratitude exercise, where the control group (who did not practice gratitude) dipped below their original positive feelings from before they had the positive experience. Practicing a simple gratitude task led to higher levels of resilience & coping skills. Want to extend the positive feelings after good events? Jot down a quick list of what you are grateful for from those good events.

Why does gratitude increase resilience? Clinical Psychologist Dr. Lillian Nejad offers 2 reasons. 1) Gratitude helps our minds work better by also increasing creativity, optimism and our capability to handle different situations. 2) Grateful people use more coping skills such as seeking help, support, and resources, as well as approaching problems with a positive outlook of learning and growth potential. That's a lot of bang for your buck!

So how can we practice gratitude this month (and always)? Gratitude has 2 important parts:

- 1) Recognizing and appreciating the positive events or things in one's life*
- 2) Acknowledging that the source of these good things are external (at least partially) from oneself.*

◆ If taking a long car trip, or even on the way to school, play a Gratitude Game to take turns naming something you are grateful for beginning with each letter of the alphabet. To boost creativity and seeking support (qualities that are part of resilience), encourage creative answers and asking for help from others for letters that are tricky for someone to find something to be grateful for.

◆ Consider this Bible verse: *Always be joyful and never stop praying. Whatever happens, keep thanking God because of Jesus Christ. This is what God wants you to do.*

- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Contemporary English Version

Talk about ways you have seen prayer and thanksgiving work in your lives or the lives of others. How can you encourage this attitude of gratitude in yourselves and others? After practicing this for several days, do you notice a difference?

Have questions about building resilience in yourself or kids in your life? Have topics you'd like to see in a future newsletter?

Let us know at [schools@LCSFL.com](mailto:schools@LCSFL.com).



Here are some ideas to boost this trait in yourself, your family or your students. Count your blessings by spending 5 to 10 minutes writing



the details of 3 things that happened today and why you think they happened. This exercise increased happiness for a 6 month period after just 1 week of daily writing about Three Good Things. Find a way to make it a daily practice!

Savor each moment by turning in to what you are grateful for. Take a silent walk and notice each thing you are grateful for. After some time, gather together as a family or class and share what each person was grateful for. This can further boost this skill by helping each other notice even more things to be grateful for.

Practice sharing your gratitude. Take some time to write a letter expressing gratitude to someone for something that impacted you positively but you did not share your gratitude with yet. Share specifically what the person did, and how it impacted your life. Use as many details as possible. Plan to read this letter to the person, whether in-person, through video or by phone. Give the letter to the person and share about your reactions to sharing gratitude as well as the other person's reactions to receiving gratitude. Many people who practice sharing a gratitude letter report immediate positive impacts, and also report that they last 1 month or longer.

Challenge yourself and any kids in your life to develop a practice of gratitude in big and small ways this month!

*Klibert, J., Rochani, H., Samawi, H. et al. The Impact of an Integrated Gratitude Intervention on Positive Affect and Coping Resources. Int J Appl Posit Psychol 3, 23-41 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41042-019-00015-6>*

*The, D. (2019) 4 Ways to practice gratitude and build resilience. Thrive Global. Retrieved from <https://thriveglobal.com/stories/4-ways-to-practice-gratitude-and-build-resilience/>*

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