

Gratitude Lessons 1-3

(The lessons can be adapted to your specific grade level)

Optimistic Closure> One-Minute Accolade

Time: 2 minutes

Overview:

The facilitator invites a moment of reflection on the current experience, then sets a timer for one minute to allow the group to contribute toward seeing how many voices can be added to the room during that time.

When and Why:

Quick, meaningful, and informative, this activity is especially useful when it feels like there just isn't time for an Optimistic Closing!

SEL Focus: This activity focuses on **Self-Awareness** (Accurate Self-Perception) as participants reflect on their learning; **Self-Management** (Impulse Control) as they choose how to contribute in a way that leaves airtime for others; and **Social Awareness** (Respect for Others) as they absorb the variety of input from those who share aloud.

Steps:

1. Inform participants that you are going to set the timer for one minute (or longer if you have more time). During that time, the group will see how many people it can hear from.
2. Invite participants to think silently for a minute about ONE reflection question that you provide, such as: Something you appreciated about today, something you learned, something you want to thank someone for, or something that went very well, something you are grateful for, etc. Tell them to raise their hand when they have an idea of what they'd like to share.
3. Once several hands are raised, select one person who will start off. Explain that when you start the timer, the first person will go. Then anyone can share, whenever they're ready.
4. Encourage participants to listen attentively to each speaker. When one person finishes, someone else begins. It's okay if there is quiet between people sharing; that is natural.

5. Repeat the reflection question and start the timer.
6. When the timer goes off, listen as the person who is already speaking finishes. Then thank the group and move on. It's okay if not everyone who wanted to share had a turn this time. With repeated opportunities, the group grows more fluent and also more comfortable with silence between sharing. This closing activity can be used over and over without losing its impact!

Modifications and Variations:

With larger groups or as a smaller group becomes more comfortable with this strategy, set the time for two minutes instead of one. For very large groups, expand to three minutes.

([CASEL](#))

Introduction Script:

Gratitude is feeling thankful or appreciative. It helps us to see our own strengths and the support we have around us. It is natural to have all kinds of emotions, like feeling grumpy or blue, or worried or nervous.

Sometimes you know why you have these feelings, and other times you don't. Either way, there is always something you can do, like remembering a few good things that you're happy about. Whenever you are having a hard time, try naming three good things that are happening in your life.

Here are a few examples: Snuggling under the covers in a cozy bed, cuddling with a pet or stuffed animal, a song you like to sing, a game you like to play or something simple, like running fast. When you think of three good things when you're feeling big emotions, it's not to pretend that whatever is upsetting you isn't happening. It is OK to feel upset. In times like these, it's helpful to remember that you can feel two things at once. You can feel grumpy or worried and nervous about the hard things, and feel grateful for the good things.

Activity: Shout-Out of Appreciation Circle>

Students can sit or stand in a circle. Let your students know that only one person may talk at a time.

Some ways of doing this are:

- Passing a "talking stick" or stuffed animal around the circle

- Raising hands and calling on students
- Writing each student's name on a popsicle stick and drawing random names

Begin the activity with your own shout-out of appreciation, and then continue passing around the circle until everyone has had an opportunity to share.

Examples of shout-out themes:

- Focusing on the people in the circle, give a shout-out of appreciation to an individual or group of people for an action they have done that you appreciate. For example, "I want to give a shout-out to Stacey for teaching me some dance moves at lunch time."
- Think about something you are grateful for in yourself, like a talent or skill.
- Think about the material things you are grateful for. For example: a bed, a hot meal, or a warm shower.
- An experience or memory you've had.

Have students close their eyes at the end of the circle and take 3 breaths, picturing in their minds what they are grateful for.

([SBT](#))