



Good Medicine Bundle

DIGITAL LESSONS

OPERATION
PREVENTION

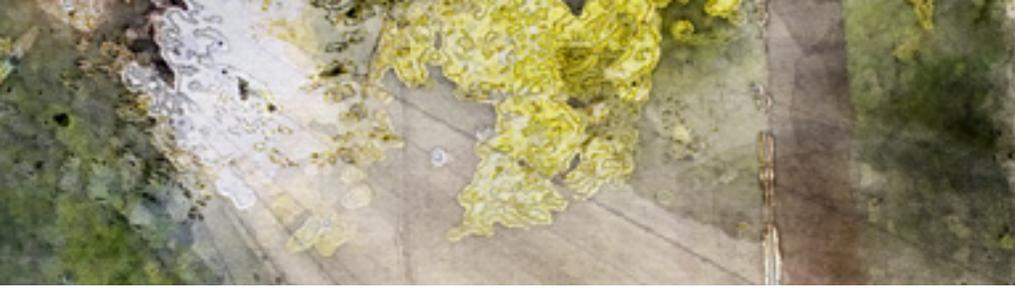
Gratitude is a
Native American
Way of Life



Discovery
EDUCATION



Elementary School Activity



Activity

Gratitude is a Native American Way of Life



Focus Skill

Gratitude and the Brain



Time

45–60 minutes

Overview

This activity introduces students to the Native American cultural value of expressing gratitude daily. Many tribes share the cultural value of being thankful for the elements that Earth provides as well as the community around them. This was a critical way of life that kept one in balance or harmony with self, others, and nature. This activity also shares that the cultural value of gratitude also includes gift giving. Students will connect being thankful/grateful to the neuroscience in our brains to show that being thankful improves our minds and bodies. The activity closes with the Haudenosaunee (hoh-dee-noh-shoh-nee) Thanksgiving Address that is a prayer of gratitude used in daily life.

Objectives

Students will:

- ◆ Identify the Native American cultural value of giving thanks and gift giving as a form of gratitude.
- ◆ Explore how being thankful or grateful can scientifically benefit our brains and bodies.
- ◆ Read and discuss the daily prayer: “Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address: Greetings to the Natural World.”
- ◆ Determine ways to express gratitude and thanks in our daily lives.

Materials

- ◆ Blank paper and coloring pencils or crayons
- ◆ Student Handout 1: “*Celebrating our Friendship Through Gifts*”
- ◆ Student Handout 2: “*How Gratitude Helps the Brain and Body*”
- ◆ Student Handout 3: “*Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address: Greetings to the Natural World*”

Lesson Resources

“*Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address: Greetings to the Natural World*”

Informational References

Discovering the Health - Wharton Healthcare Management Alumni Association

-*What Can the Brain Reveal about Gratitude?* (berkeley.edu)

How Gratitude Changes You and Your Brain (berkeley.edu)

For more information on the Haudenosaunee Confederacy visit: *The League of Nations - Haudenosaunee Confederacy*

Standards

National Health Education Standards

- ◆ Standard 2: Students will analyze the influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology, and other factors on health behaviors.
- ◆ Standard 5: Students will demonstrate the ability to use decision-making skills to enhance health.
- ◆ Standard 6: Students will demonstrate the ability to use goal-setting skills to enhance health.

Next Generation Science Standards

- ◆ LS1.D: Information Processing: Different sense receptors are specialized for particular kinds of information, which may be then processed by the animal’s brain. Animals are able to use their perceptions and memories to guide their actions.

English Language Arts Common Core State Standards

- ◆ Reading:
 - ◆ R.1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.



Procedure

1. Begin the activity by placing students in pairs. Then direct students to secretly draw an object such as a toy, treat, game, etc. they think their partner might like to receive. Once they are finished drawing, have students fold the pictures up as if they are folding a gift. Then ask the pairs to exchange “gifts” and listen for student responses. Finish with a brief discussion on how it felt to receive even the thought of a gift from their classmate.
2. Next, as a class read Student Handout 1 “Celebrating our Friendships through Gifts.” Give students time to answer the questions at the bottom of the handout.
3. After reading, ask students these discussion questions: If your community does not knowingly have tribes represented, during this discussion emphasize that there are many Native American tribes and communities across the nation. Though many lessons students see in school tend to portray Native people in a past or historical sense, the reality is that Native people live just like any other community and many of them live in urban or other areas instead of on reservations. In fact, any land in which Americans live today was once inhabited by a tribe.
 - ◇ What do you notice about the images in this handout? How do these images show us what a tradition is? What information do these images give us about Native Americans?
 - ◇ Native Americans practice gift giving in their daily lives to show gratitude and value of others. What are some of the gift giving practices that your family has?
 - ◇ How might gift giving benefit a community?
4. If time allows, this discussion may bring up the difference between gift giving and gratitude on holidays versus the cultural act of giving gifts as gratitude any time. Many times the expected gift giving on holidays and birthdays can actually cause stressful or worried feelings rather than the natural chemical release of daily gratitude. This does not mean that holiday gift giving is bad but it is important to point out the difference in how our bodies respond to a value of spontaneous gratitude versus holiday gift giving expectations.
5. Next, have students read Student Handout 2: How Gratitude Helps the Brain and Body.” This handout briefly references the chemicals in our brain that are sometimes called the happy chemicals and how expressing gratitude even inwardly can help release these chemicals. Discuss with students the power that our actions and thoughts can have on the wellness of our bodies. Emphasize to students that their classroom is like a community. Have them brainstorm ways that their class can begin showing gratitude each day so that they can grow stronger together.



Procedure (continued)

6. The teacher can place these ideas on a chart or somewhere visible and determine how students can incorporate this into future classes. Potentially, the class could hold a gift giving ceremony with handmade items or drawings.
7. To close out the lesson, share the “Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address” with students. Explain that this is not referencing the holiday of Thanksgiving (which many Native people do not celebrate because it is a part of a historical narrative of pain and termination of their people). Instead, this is a prayer of thanks that is given daily and many times at gatherings or ceremonies. Inform students that the name Haudenosaunee (hoh-dee-noh-shoh-nee) is a confederacy of six tribal nations who united with the help of Hiawatha to bring peace and strength to their people. The six tribal nations are Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora; and the term Haudenosaunee means “people of the longhouse.”
8. Have students stand in a circle if applicable and divide the prayer up with each student sharing one section of giving thanks. If time allows, give students time to read and practice their section before finishing class with giving thanks.



Student Handout 1

Celebrating our Friendships Through Gifts

American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian people across the nation share many common values including the belief that giving gifts to friends is a key aspect of our lives to be whole. The photographs below show the same Giveaway ceremony being performed in the 1890s and recently in 2018. This tradition has survived over the years and generations because it has always been successful at bringing friends and loved ones together and creating a feeling of gratitude and love. The ceremony is held when individuals want to give a public display of thanks to their friends and community. Gifts are given to honor the support that has helped people achieve good things in their lives such as high school and college degrees.



Figure 1: A SiouX giveaway ceremony occurring in 1897 close to Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota. http://faculty.humanities.uci.edu/tcthorne/wintercount/images_wintercount/siouXgiveaway.jpg



Figure 2: A modern Giveaway ceremony, gifts are provided to friends as a show of thanks. (photo origin unknown)

REFLECTION

List two people to whom you would like to show gratitude and explain why you are grateful for them.

What kind of gifts can we give that don't cost money?



How Gratitude Helps the Brain and Body

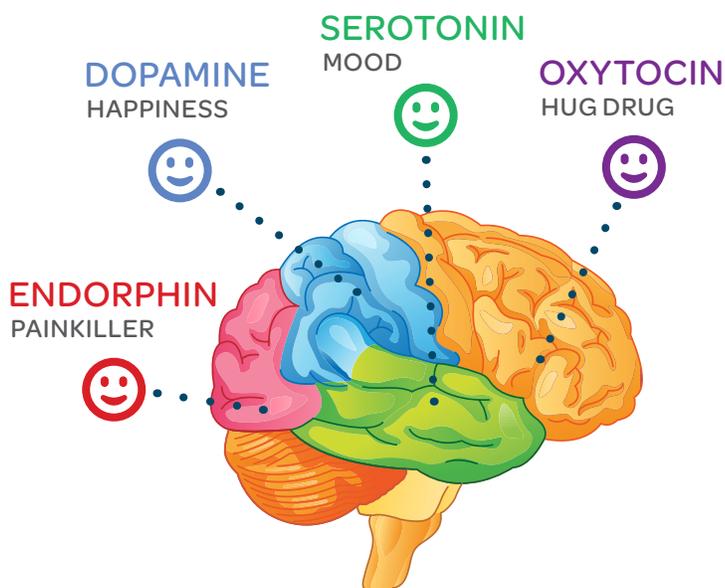
The English word gratitude comes from the Latin root *gratus* or *gratia*. This word may also sound familiar since it is also the root word for *gracias* in Spanish which means “thank you.” Gratitude simply means to be thankful. It is a strong feeling that usually causes us to show our thankfulness to someone or about something. When we show gratitude to others, it makes them feel good. Scientists now know that showing gratitude can also cause our bodies and brains to be healthier.

BENEFITS OF BEING GRATEFUL

- ◇ Better sleep
- ◇ A more positive outlook and attitude
- ◇ Feeling less stress or sadness
- ◇ Better heart health
- ◇ More resilience after trauma
- ◇ Healthier relationships with others
- ◇ Better self-esteem

Feeling thankful or grateful makes our hypothalamus start working. This is the part of our brain that controls many of our body’s actions (see the image on the next page). The hypothalamus makes our limbic system work. This system is a network of nerves that control our emotions and feelings. This system releases chemicals in our body such as *dopamine*, *oxytocin*, *endorphins*, or *serotonin*. These are sometimes called happy or reward chemicals. Some scientists say these chemicals make us feel like we do when we eat delicious chocolate, or we receive a hug from someone we love. What scientists are realizing is that being thankful and showing gratitude helps our brains and our bodies be balanced and stronger.

**HAPPY
CHEMICALS
OF THE LIMBIC
SYSTEM**



RESPOND TO THE READING

How can being grateful change your body and mind?

How can this information help you be a better friend to you classmates or others in your community?

SELF-REFLECTION

Look back at the list of benefits of gratitude. Which of these benefits could be helpful for you?

Think of two actions or thoughts that you could do that will help you feel and show gratitude.

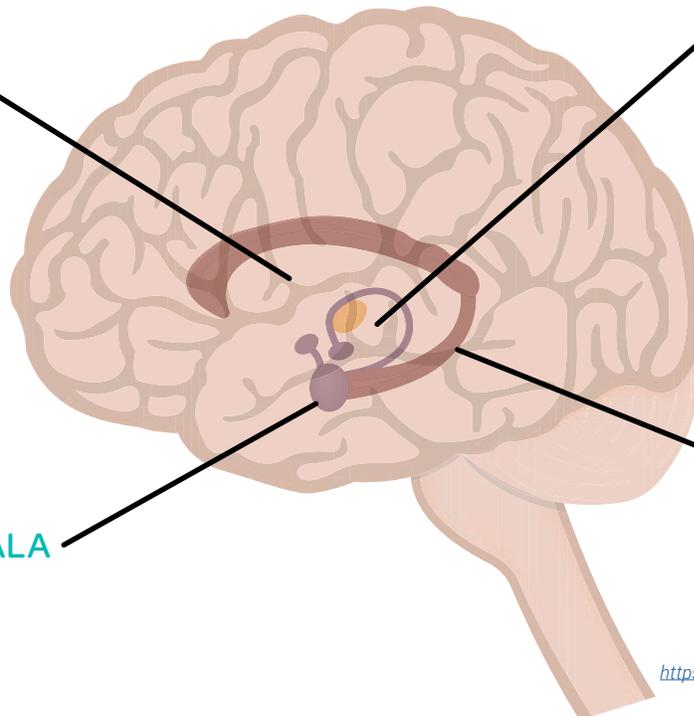
The Limbic System

HYPOTHALAMUS
HOMEOSTASIS

THALAMUS
RELAYS INFORMATION

AMYGDALA
EMOTION

HIPPOCAMPUS
MEMORY CONVERSION



<https://teenbraintalk.wordpress.com/limbic-system/>

