

Thanksgiving Kids & Teens Yoga Class



Teaching Thanksgiving

There are numerous ways to teach thankfulness to youth. You'll find in this booklet a variety of techniques that will work with children and teenagers including discussion topics, mindfulness techniques, activities, yoga poses, crafts, music, coloring pages, and more. Read through all the suggestions and then pick the ones that best suit you and your students.

Attitude of Gratitude

The most effective way to teach gratitude is to live with an 'attitude of gratitude.' Children will notice your example and emulate it. One way to cultivate this attitude is to make counting your blessing a daily habit. Always express thanks for those in attendance in your class, for their attention, their contributions, their efforts, etc. For example: "I'm so happy when you practice yoga with me." "I love it when you sit calmly and quietly listening to your breath." "Thank you for rolling up your mats and tidying the studio. I really appreciate your help." Also during class mention things in your everyday life for that give you joy.



Santosha

The yoga *niyama* (observance) *santosha* means contentment. We cultivate *santosha* when we express gratitude as we learn to appreciate what we have and recognize that it is enough. We can be happy with who we are, where we are and what we have. In our busy world we are constantly inundated with needs and wants. The more you chase after these things, the more you desire, creating a vicious cycle. Gratitude stops this cycle and allows us to be present and enjoy the moment. Instead of wishing for things, we are content with what we have and who we are. Bask in the infinite goodness that is you now. Delight in the beauty and majesty of the world today. Embody thankful energy in how you move, what you do, and the words you say.

Law of Abundance

The law of abundance states that there is enough for everyone to have some: enough love, enough talent, enough joy, enough resources, enough peace. When we go through life knowing that there is enough for everyone, we can appreciate all we have and recognize another's abundance as well. This helps when you see someone with something you admire or want in your own life. You are able to recognize what they have knowing you will achieve all you need in life to be happy and successful in your own right. There is no need for jealousy or

antagonism. No need to cut that person down in the hopes of building yourself up. Acknowledge the bounty of the world which allows everyone to have enough. Invest in yourself and continue to enrich the world through selfless service. Everyone wins.

Gratitude Journal

As a class keep a gratitude journal. In a small notebook have one or more students write or draw something for which they are thankful each class/week. Alternatively have small slips of paper for students to use and then after class glue these into the class journal. Entries can be signed or anonymous. This is a wonderful way to engage students while they wait for class to begin and helps them transition from their busy day to yoga class as they contemplate the wonder, joy and beauty of life. Regularly share some of the entries.



Gratitude Mindful Breathing

Place one hand on your belly, the other on your heart. Close your eyes and feel your body breathe: the gentle rise and fall of the chest and belly. With each inhale think of something you are thankful for: family, school, yoga class, jello, hugs, sunshine, flowers, books, etc. Fill your body and mind with your blessings. Acknowledge the little ways beauty, kindness, peace and joy infuse your life. Smile deep inside. Continue for 5-10 breaths. Gently open your eyes and share with your friends one thing for which you are thankful.

Mindful Eating



Provide a small, healthy, allergy aware snack to students. For example: dried apple, raisins, grapes, blueberries, Cheerios. Have students sit quietly and examine the snack. Notice its color, shape, smell, etc. Consider where the snack came from. Who cultivates it? How does it get to market? To the table? Have them place the snack in their mouths and slowly begin to eat it. Pay attention to flavour, texture and even sounds. Observe how your body moves in order for you to eat: the jaw, mouth, throat, etc. Chew slowly, purposefully. Truly experience the art of eating. Express thanks for food, for the people and processes that provide it, for your ability to enjoy it.

Sending Joy

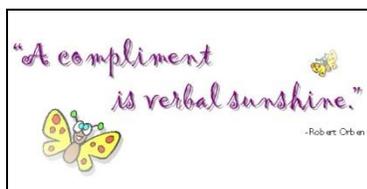
Sit quietly for a few minutes. Focus on your breath, the rhythmic rise and fall of the inhalation and exhalation. Bring to mind a far away country...one you know little about so that your mind

is not clouded by preconceived notions of economy, politics, etc. Simply know that in that country there is a person who would benefit from more joy in his or her life. Imagine that person: their age, how tall they are, what they do for a living, the colour of their hair, etc. Add as much detail as you can. Now imagine that he or she is suddenly feeling happy for no particular reason, simply because he or she was sent a dose of joy from you. Wish them a brighter smile, a lift in their walk, a sense of well-being. Image them stopping during their hectic day to enjoy something wonderful: a butterfly, a snowflake, the smell of freshly baked bread. Imagine that person appreciating their life just as it is right now. Imagine their surprise at the sudden good feeling inside and how that makes them be kinder to others, who in turn pay it forward. Your good intentions have set off an avalanche of joy. Marvel at how good it feels to send joy to a complete stranger.

Five Good Moments

This game teaches children and teens to pay attention to the events of each day and intentionally focus on the positives. It encourages paying close attention, living in the moment and appreciating all that life has to offer. Encourage students to pay attention today/this week to the moments that make them feel good and try to find five different ones. The moment might be a thought that inspires, a view that is lovely and makes them pause, an interaction with someone, etc. What it is doesn't matter. What matters is that for at least a moment it made them feel good. You do the same. When you get together at the end of the day/in class next week, share your five good things with one another.

Circle of Compliments



This activity focuses attention on each student and provides a compliment from their peers. This is a powerful way to foster connections and demonstrates that even the small things we do are noticed by others. Have the class sit in a circle. In turn say one thing about the person to your right that you appreciate/admire.

That person then says something kind about the person to their right until you have completed the circle. For example: "I'm thankful that Julie has a lovely smile." or "I appreciate the way Michael gets ready for class quickly and efficiently."

Thankful List

Using felt markers and a large sheet of paper (ie: poster paper, newspaper roll end) have children write or draw things for which that they are grateful. Write as many as you can within a certain time period. Discuss the various contributions and count the many different blessing

we have in our lives. See which ones can be made into yoga poses: pets = Cat Pose (Marjarasana) or Downward Facing Dog Pose (Adho Mukha Svanasana), books = Bound Angle Pose (Baddha Konanasa), nature = Tree Pose (Vrikasasana), Mountain Pose (Tadasana) or Flower Pose, etc.

Fun with Words

Increase emotional vocabulary and self expression by brainstorming various words which express feeling grateful. Alternatively provide the list below and discuss the many feelings gratitude encompasses.

Another way to say thank you is: I feel...

...grateful, happy, excited, elated, bewildered, amazed, loved, adored, cherished, supported, important, fussed-over, acknowledged, pleased, obliged, praised, honoured, recognized, merry, mirthful, joyful, cheerful, delighted, gleeful, glad, contented, satisfied, enraptured, cherry, jolly, sparkling, enchanted, blissful, jovial, peaceful, exhilarated, gratified, ecstatic, charmed pleasant, overjoyed, light-hearted, radiant, vivacious, sunny, smiling, content, animated, lively, spirited, exuberant, good-humored, jubilant, playful, thrilled, carefree, in good spirits, happy as a lark, beside myself, jazzed up, bubbling over, tickled to death, happy-go-lucky, in seventh heaven, on cloud 9, walking on sunshine, high as a kite, forever in your debt, embarrassed, unworthy, pleased as punch, happy as a clam, overjoyed.

Crafts

A number of fun crafts, activities and other Thanksgiving printables are available from [Enchanted Learning](#) and [DLTK's](#).

Music

- *Turkey in the Straw*
- *Over the River and Through the Woods*
- *Thanksgiving Day* by John McCutcheon
- *Thank You For the Music* by ABBA
- *Thank You* by Dido
- *Kind & Generous* by Natalie Merchant
- *What a Wonderful World* by Louie Armstrong
- *I Thank You* by Sam & Dave
- *The Thanksgiving Song* by Mary Chapin Carpenter
- *Somewhere Over the Rainbow* by Israel Kamakawiwo'Ole
- *Thank You, Mom* by Good Charlotte
- *Thanksgiving Theme* by Vince Guaraldi from "A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving"
- *Beautiful* by Marillion
- *Sanctuary* by Donna de Lory

Asanas

Kids

Print off p.10 onto cardstock and make flashcards, one for each photo. Have children randomly choose a card to reveal something for which we can be thankful.

Dog: (Pets) Downward Facing Dog Pose (Adho Mukha Svanasana)

Cake: (Birthdays, Celebrations) Candle Pose – kneel tall. Light the candles on the cake by inhaling while lifting arms overhead, bringing the palms together. Blow the candles out by exhaling while quickly lowering the arms to your sides. Repeat a few times.

Friends: Chair Pose (Utkatasana)

1. *Partner Pose:* Facing your partner grasp wrists. Simultaneously sit into an imaginary chair. Lean back trusting your partner to provide balance. Come back up. Variation: Cross arms and grasp wrists. Sit into Chair Pose. Release one arm reaching it behind you. Come back to holding both wrists. Release the other arm. Come up to standing.
2. *Group Pose:* Stand in a line like a train, one in front of the other. The last person sits into Utkatasana. The person in front of her sits on her lap. Continue until all students are lightly sitting on the knees of the person behind then. The more people you have the harder this is so start with small groups of 4-5 to learn the technique, then progress by making a circle with everyone in the group sitting in chair pose together.

Tree: (Nature) Tree Pose (Vriksasana)

Ball: (Games, Play) Rock & Roll to Standing – Lying on your mat, hug your knees into your chest. Rock forward and back gently stimulating the entire spine. Roll on the floor like a ball. If you want a challenge try to roll so much that you come to standing without using your hands. This is often easier if your ankles are crossed. Roll back down and come up to standing again with the other leg in front and ankles crossed.

Doll: (Toys) Rag Doll Pose – Stand with feet slightly apart and flop over like a rag doll. Softly bend your knees and let your head and arms hang down. Gently sway side to side. Relax and breathe. Slowly roll up and return to standing.

Lion: (Wild animals) Lion Pose (Simhasana)

Stars: (Universe) Standing 5 Pointed Star Pose – Stand with your feet more than hips distance apart. Extend your arms at shoulder height. Count all 5 points of your star (2 hands,

2 feet & head). Twinkle your fingers. Twinkle your toes. Twinkle your eyes. Sing *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* as you shift the weight from one foot to the other.

Airplane: (Transportation) Warrior III (Virabhadrasana III)

Pizza: (Food) Wide Angle Seated Forward Bend (Upavistha Konasana)

Bed: (Comfort/Home) Group breathing exercise - have children lay down with heads resting on a friend's tummy, the entire class can be connected this way, spend a few minutes breathing, laughing, connecting.

Thankful: child chooses something they are thankful for and creates a yoga pose to represent this thing/feeling/person.

Teens

Living with gratitude means opening your heart to wonder, enchantment, love, a sense of playfulness, and bliss. Encourage this with poses which open the heart.

Heart Openers:

Cobra (Bhujangasana)

Sphinx

Upward Facing Dog (Urdhva Mukha

Svanasana)

Cat/Cow (/Bitilasana)

Dancer's (Natarajasana)

Camel (Ustrasana)

Bridge (Setu Bandha Sarvangasana)

Bow (Dhanurasana)

Locust (Salambasana)

Flip your Down Dog/Wild Thing

Cow Faced (Gomukasana)

Fish (Matsyasana)

Wheel (Urdhva Dhanurasana)

Thanksgiving and the Holiday Season often include large meals and overindulgence. Balance this with poses to aid digestion and lighten the load placed on internal organs.

Digestion/Detox:

Simple Seated Twist (Sukhasana with a Twist)

Washing Machine

Half Lord of the Fishes (Ardha

Matsyendrasana)

Marichi's Pose I & III (Marichiyasana I & III)

Wind Relieving Pose

Wide Angle Seated Forward Bend

(Upavistha Konasana)

Quotes

“Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow.” — Melody Beattie

“Best of all is it to preserve everything in a pure, still heart, and let there be for every pulse a thanksgiving, and for every breath a song.” — Konrad von Gesner

“If the only prayer you said in your whole life was, "thank you," that would suffice.” — Meister Eckhart

“I would maintain that thanks are the highest form of thought; and that gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder.” — G.K. Chesterton

“Praise the bridge that carried you over.” — George Colman

“Not what we say about our blessings, but how we use them, is the true measure of our thanksgiving.” — W.T. Purkiser

“We can only be said to be alive in those moments when our hearts are conscious of our treasures.” — Thornton Wilder

“There is not a more pleasing exercise of the mind than gratitude. It is accompanied with such an inward satisfaction that the duty is sufficiently rewarded by the performance.” — Joseph Addison

“Gratitude is the music of the heart, when its chords are swept by the breeze of kindness.” — Author Unknown

“Who does not thank for little will not thank for much.” — Estonian Proverb

“Gratitude can transform common days into thanksgivings, turn routine jobs into joy, and change ordinary opportunities into blessings.” — William Arthur Ward

“Can you see the holiness in those things you take for granted—a paved road or a washing machine? If you concentrate on finding what is good in every situation, you will discover that your life will suddenly be filled with gratitude, a feeling that nurtures the soul.” — Rabbi Harold Kushner

“Give thanks for a little and you will find a lot.” — The Hausa of Nigeria

“Gratefulness is the key to a happy life that we hold in our hands, because if we are not grateful, then no matter how much we have we will not be happy — because we will always want to have something else or something more.” — Brother David Steindl-Rast

Poetry

During Savasana/final relaxation you may want to read a poem on gratitude. Here are two of my faves.

Yoga of the Heart

— Bob Weisenberg

When I want to reconnect
With the infinite wonder of the universe
And remember
That I'm an integral part
Of that infinite wonder,
I often just relax and think
About the infinite wonder of my heart
And the way it pumps nourishment
From the air we breathe
Throughout our wondrous bodies.

How can anyone doubt
That body and spirit and universe
Are one
When we can feel
The awesome unfathomableness
Of the heart
In all its physical and spiritual wonder
Embracing, dancing with the breath
Every moment of our lives?



“Focusing with perfect discipline on the heart,
one understands the nature of consciousness.”

— Yoga Sutra 3:35

Thank You Life

— Gary van Warmerdam

Thank you Life

Thank you for this breath

Thank you for this inhale

Thank you for this exhale

Thank you for this Life

Thank you Heart

Thank you for this pounding

Thank you for this pulsing

Thank you for this Love

Thank you feet

Thank you for this walk

Thank you for this run

Thank you for the Dancing

Thank you Eyes

Thank you for the Sunrise

Thank you for the Sunset

Thank you for all the Colors

Thank you Ears

Thank you for The Music

Thank you for the Rhythm

And Thank you for the Stillness

Thank you Hands

Thank you for the Caressing

Thank you for the Clapping

And Thank you for the Holding

Thank you Mouth

Thank you for the nourishment

Thank you for the Wine (Water)

Thank you for the Kisses

Thank you Nose

Thank you for the Flowers

Thank you for the Pines

Thank you for the Sniffles

Thank you Arms and Shoulders

Thank you for the Carrying

Thank you for the Burdening

And Thank you for the Hugging

Thank you Voice

Thank you for the Expression

Thank you for the Word

Thank you for the Gift of Creation

Thank you for this Day

Thank you for the Light

Thank you for the Stars

Thank you for the Night

Thank you Self

Thank you for the Laughter

Thank you for the Play

Thank you for You

Thank you for the Emotions

Thank you for the Joys

Thank you for the Tears and Sorrows

Thank you for the Richness

Thank you for the Abundance that is.

Thank you for the Abundance that is given.

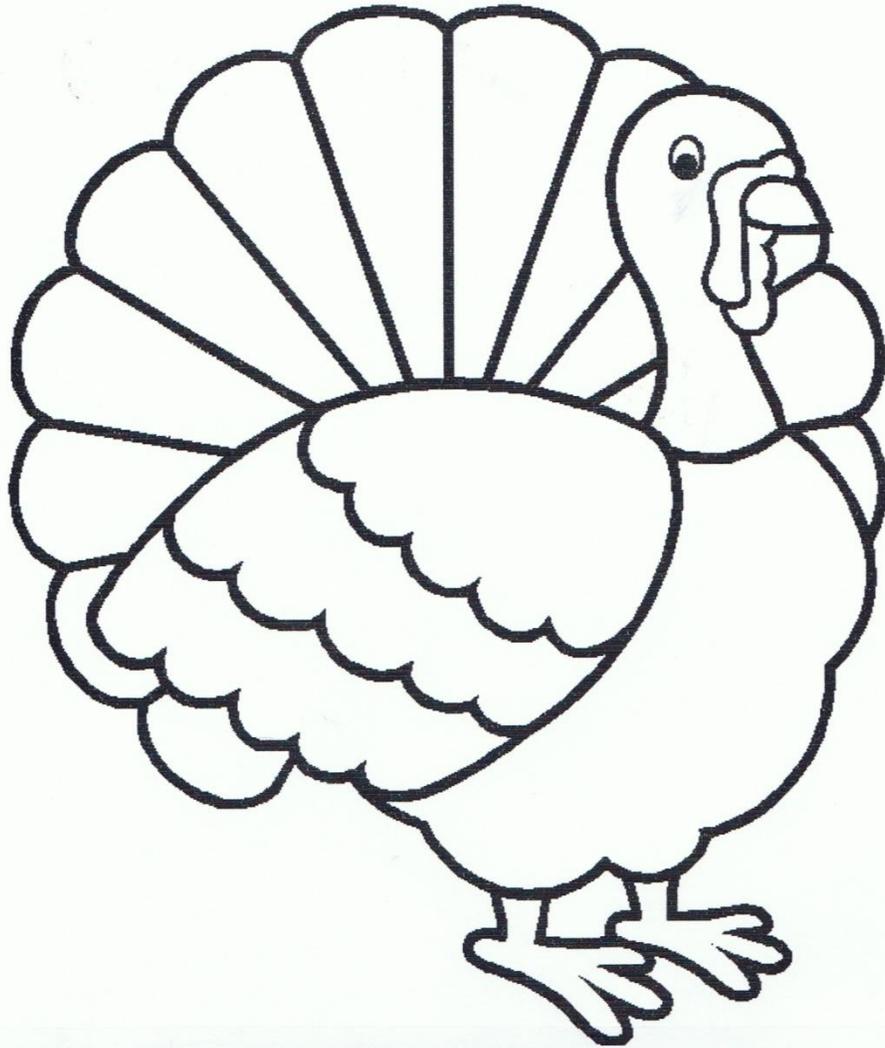
Thank you for the so many experiences
and so many things

Thank you for this Dance.

Thank you Life



Coloring Page



Happy Thanksgiving