STUDENT GRATITUDE ESSAYS

The following essays are from high school students from a study Dr. Robert Emmons and I are in the midst of conducting. Students were given the following instructions:

Please write a SHORT ESSAY about what being thankful means to you. There are no right or wrong answers. What being thankful means to you may not be the same as what it means to your friend.

Here are a few gems illustrating gratitude’s association with personal and relational well-being in adolescents.

“What being thankful means to me is to see everything as a gift from God. I see my very life as a gift from God, and I am so thankful to know him. He has always provided for me with everything that I need so I never need to worry because he takes care of me. I am so thankful for my school, the teachers, and my close friends. I thank God for bringing me though all my 12 years of school. I thank God for the loving family I have. I have so much to be thankful for. Each day of my life, I live for Jesus Christ.”

"My life wouldn't be the same without the people that have shaped and molded my character. They have given me everything I wanted and have helped me succeed, and for that, I am thankful. I think it is important to be humble, and remember all of the people that helped you get to where you are, whether it's your parents, your siblings, or God. Being thankful is being able to let go of all ideas of self-importance, and instead acknowledge everything in your life that has made it better. I am thankful to God and my family, and my friends, and even my teacher for help me improve my life."

"Being thankful to me is appreciating everything God has given you. I think it means counting your blessings and being grateful for all the wonderful things in your life. Being thankful to me means stopping to realize I have a wonderful supportive family as well as other relatives who care and love me very much. I am glad to know I have so many wonderful and loving people in my life that support me always. I am happy to know I have a family who encourages me to pursue my dreams and do well in school. I think being thankful means realizing how well off and lucky you are compared to other people. I always think about how lucky I am because I have a nice house with all the food and necessities I need to be happy. I realize there are starving kids in Africa and kids without parents and siblings. I appreciate everything I was blessed with in my life and that's what being thankful means to me."

"My mom has stage IV lung cancer which, if you don't know, is the most severe case of cancer. She was diagnosed at the end of July and was given only a few months to live. Now, as of February 27th, she is still alive. She has fought the disease fearlessly for several months now, and her spirits remain high; despite the fact that she cannot walk anymore, she sleeps most of the day, and she is in constant pain. The maximum dosage of chemotherapy and radiation treatments did not shrink any of the tumors even a little bit. I don't know how she, or my father for that matter, is able to do it. I really don't. However, I continue to be thankful for the wonderful
childhood I had, and for my mother who did an incredible job raising me. She is a saint and, even now at the end, she is never mean or cruel to me in any way, despite the amount of pain she's in. She is truly a role model of courage for anybody. When my brother went back to college after Christmas break, he awkwardly asked my father, "Should I say goodbye to mom?" my father replied, "You don't have to say anything. She knows it all. And that's the beauty of it." It truly is a beautiful thing when you can be thankful, even when the woman you came from is rapidly dying, and there's nothing at all you can do to stop it."

“In my eyes you should be thankful for everything you have. That includes family, friends, possessions, and even struggles in your life. I am thankful for the struggles in my life because I know that they have helped me grow as a person. At the time they seemed unfair but when I look back I am so thankful that I came out as a much stronger person. I am especially thankful for the people who have helped me through my struggles because without them I don’t know where I would be. Even now I am struggling and dealing with issues that are hard but I know in the end I’ll be a better person. I believe we should be thankful for all our life experiences and be thankful for the time we spend with our loved ones. Through these experiences, we can help others. Basically, we should be thankful for everything we have.”