

Adult's Gratitude Curriculum

Engage with gratitude across several dimensions of our lives: for yourself, for community, for our human family, and for Earth. Join together through various kinds of activities to notice how gratitude touches our lives. Use these as the basis for First Day School programs, or find activities you can do with others in your community.

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Gratitude for Yourself - Adults

This guide contains many resources. We recognize that every community's needs are different, so feel free to pick and choose what works best for you.

Key goals and ideas

There is that of God, light, spirit, in each of us.

We can find, affirm, and nurture that in ourselves, and in one another.

Our gifts do not belong to us alone.

Preparation

Discern which (if not all) of the readings and quotes you want to use.

Choose queries to ask and plan for how you will use them (possibilities are explored [here](#)).

Introduction

When you look in a mirror, what do you see? Who do you see? Do you just see a set of eyes staring back at yourself with skin and hair? Do we see different stories and memories? Memories of difficult times? Someone with many gifts? How can we look into the mirror and recognize Spirit?

Through practicing gratitude we clean our mirrors, washing away the dirt and grime that can get in the way of noticing Spirit. It's easy to see this on an intellectual level, but how do we get there experientially? As part of their training with Right Sharing of World Resources, in addition to learning business skills, women in the women's groups in Guatemala clean their own mirrors in this way through *fortalecimiento personal* or personal strengthening practices ([Heart Training in Guatemala](#)), so that they can better see themselves, and each other, and the gifts they have to share. When gifts are noticed, recognized, and celebrated, the dust on our mirror is cleared away. Through our time together we'll be working on cleaning our mirrors and noticing what shows up that we might not have seen so clearly before. In this light, we'll explore what this means for our responsibility, or ability to respond, to each other and our communities in this world we share.

Readings and Quaker Quotes

“Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come, that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them. Then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one; whereby in them you may be a blessing, and make the witness of God in them to bless you.”

George Fox, [The Works of George Fox](#), pages 288-289

“The love of God again makes us free, for it draws us to set a low value on those things wherein we are subject to others – our wealth, our position, our reputation, and our life – and to set a high value on those things which no man can take from us – our integrity, our righteousness, our love for all men, and our communion with God.”

Kenneth Boulding, [The Practice of The Love of God](#)

"One of my Guatemalan colleagues had been taught by the Jesuits that having a gift should be treated not as a virtue but as a responsibility. After all, because it is given to you, a gift is not something for which you can take credit."

Adam Kahane, [Power and Love](#), page 36

“As Christians, all we possess are the gifts of God. Now in distributing it to others we act as his steward, and it becomes our station to act agreeable to that divine wisdom which he graciously gives to his servants.”

John Woolman, [A Plea for the Poor](#), page 5

Queries - Choose whichever are appropriate for you, a mix of queries that approach the range of human experience (emotional, intellectual, personal stories) often work best

What is something you've inherited from your ancestors that you are proud of?

Where do you see that of God in yourself? in someone else in your life?

Share a time when one of your gifts blossomed in an unexpected way. What supported its blossoming?

Share a time when you witnessed someone else unexpectedly express their own gift beautifully. What conditions supported this happening?

What is a gift I have to share with others, that I can't take (much) credit for, or that I have others to thank for?

What is a gift I feel called to share with others (that I can share more of)? What might this look like?

Fill in the blank on what is true for you (in the spirit of gratitude): "Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the _____est one of all?"

Suggested practice for the next week:

You can do some combination of journaling, drawing, and verbally sharing your responses to these queries with a friend or with family

What are you excited about?

What do you find challenging?

What are you feeling?

What are you grateful for about who you are?

Write an affirming letter to a younger version of yourself

Gratitude for Community - Adults

This guide contains many resources. We recognize that every community's needs are different, so feel free to pick and choose what works best for you.

Key goals and ideas

Recognizing the gifts that community offers.

Noticing what is vital for generating and sustaining community, and what leads to its disintegration.

We are connected in community, and our individual choices matter to each other.

Preparation

Discern which (if not all) of the readings and quotes you want to use.

Choose queries to ask and plan for how you will use them (possibilities are explored [here](#)).

Introduction

A community is a lot like a tapestry, or something woven together out of thread or wool. A community is threaded together out of many individual people. The different colors, textures, and fibers signify the different kinds of people that might make up a community, their different gifts, experiences, and other kinds of diversity. And coming together they make something more complex and beautiful than the individual parts.

In Guatemala, one of Right Sharing of World Resource's partner countries, [tapestry weaving](#) has a long history. Ancestral stories from the past, experiences from the present, and hopes for the future can be embedded into the tapestries as a way to communicate what is important to the weavers and their communities. Once completed, tapestries may serve as clothing to protect us from the elements, telling stories of who we were and who we might become as we go about our days. Tapestries may also serve as decorative wall hangings, bringing color and beauty to our lives. What other ways have you seen tapestries used?

Readings and Quaker Quotes

“George Fox gave as his test of a meeting the call to make it a power house, what today we should call a filling station... If these meetings of ours, these vital cells, are to be power-stations, they must feel a much greater sense of responsibility than they now do for the welfare of the community in which they live... We have too easily assumed that a local Quaker Meeting lives unto itself, is responsible only for its own worship and ministry, can then shake hands and go home to a good dinner. That is not enough. It is an eternal principle of life itself that it can be saved only through self-giving. Life takes on the glow of consecration only when it ‘loses’ itself for the sake of others. These little Quaker islands of ours, which dot the length and breadth of our country, would stir with new life if they suddenly found themselves awake to the tasks of life which lie ready to hand just there where they live.”

Rufus Jones, [The Vital Cell](#)

"I have always been impressed with the thought that people are only ready to commit themselves to each other when they no longer focus on each other but rather focus together on the larger world beyond themselves. Falling in love makes us look at each other with admiration and tenderness. Committing ourselves to one another in love makes us look together toward those who need our care: the child, the stranger, the poor, the dying. That commitment lies at the heart of every community... When I reflect on community life through the ages, I can easily see how the 'ups' are closely connected to the vibrancy of caring together and the 'downs' to absorption in internal matters. Even the most contemplative, seemingly hidden community could stay alive and well only when its life remained a life reaching out beyond the boundaries of the community. Even a life dedicated to prayer and meditation needs to maintain a quality of caring together for others. The mystery of this caring together is that it not only asks for community, but also creates it."

Henri Nouwen, [Our Greatest Gift](#), pages 64-65

"Respect also means honoring people's boundaries to the point of protecting them. If you respect someone, you do not intrude. At the same time, if you respect someone, you do not withhold yourself or distance yourself from them. I have heard many people claim that they were respecting someone by leaving them alone, when in fact they were merely distancing themselves from something they did not want to deal with."

William Isaacs, [Dialogue](#), page 114

“After months of talking about ‘building the Kingdom right here,’ I looked around at the faces in the circle and thought, ‘This is impossible! What a motley crew we are!’ I was overwhelmed with the sense of what a grab-bag of people we were, how ordinary, how collectively petty... Then came the blinding realization that this was all there was – us humans. If God was willing to make do, we had better be willing to make do, too.”

Elise Boulding, [God's Ordinaries](#), page 36

Queries - Choose whichever are appropriate for you, a mix of queries that approach the range of human experience (emotional, intellectual, personal stories) often work best

What were community practices that your ancestors practiced? What about groups indigenous to where you currently live?

For the following queries, you can choose a particular community to focus on, or people can each choose individually. It may be fruitful to focus on your meeting community.

Personal Relationship with Community

Who is in this community?

How has this community supported me during challenging times?

What resources in this community have I benefited from?

What projects in this community excite me?

What's a role you see yourself playing in this community?

How do words like obligation, responsibility, and duty bear on your relationship with this community?

Relationships within Community

How would you describe this community as a tapestry? What textures or colors are in it? What's its physical state (worn and soft, frayed at the edges)?

What experiences have "frayed the edges," "caused tears," or "made holes" in this community?

What experiences have woven this community together, creating tighter bonds?

Share a time when this community was stronger together than as a sum of its parts.

This Community in Relationship to Others

How has this community been a gift to the wider community?

How can we promote a sense of belonging among newcomers in this community?

What are we doing together that is not possible alone? How do our collective gifts and skills support us in ways that we would not be able to experience alone?

Recalling Nouwen's quote, have there been times where caring for others has created community for you all?

The Future of Community

What is something I've done that has made a difference in this community?

What concrete action can I take that will strengthen this community?

Suggested practice for the next week:

Think of a specific community in your life (neighborhood, monthly meeting, school, etc.) and do something together (big or small, small may be better since this is just in one week) to benefit this community (with your time, resources, etc.)

Examples: Contribute to/volunteer with a neighborhood food pantry, reach out to an organization and ask "how can we help?"

Gratitude for our Human Family - Adults

This guide contains many resources. We recognize that every community's needs are different, so feel free to pick and choose what works best for you.

Key goals and ideas

We are part of a larger society across time and space which has provided us with many gifts.

If we better understand our society as a whole, we can see how our choices ripple out into the world.

We are called especially to see through the eyes of the disenfranchised, as well as those who have been labeled as the enemy.

Preparation

Discern which (if not all) of the readings and quotes you want to use.

Choose queries to ask and plan for how you will use them (possibilities are explored [here](#)).

Introduction

Many people make up our human family and institutions. Some we interact with directly and many more indirectly. Like a puzzle, there are many pieces, some close and some far from each other. But they are all connected. Even that piece you'd set aside not knowing where it goes has its place, and fits well there.

When we look at one puzzle piece, it can give us an indication of where it lives and how it connects and fits together with other pieces. As human beings we are not so different. Only by looking at the whole puzzle does each piece gain coherence.

Thinking of oneself as a puzzle piece, how often in your day to day life do you come across a trace of someone who might be on the other side of the puzzle (or globe)? Where did the ingredients from your last meal come from, the people who farmed them, the long supply chains of the electronics and vehicles and other materials you interact with every day?

We only have a limited view of the whole from our own perspective. To see our society in greater clarity, we need to work to see from other perspectives too. Right Sharing of World Resources practices this by engaging in relationships with people in different countries.

Every piece matters for completing the whole picture. What do we gain by having a fuller awareness of our intertwined lives?

Readings and Quaker Quotes

“For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’

They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’

Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

Matthew 25:42-46

“To pass through a series of hardships and to languish under oppression brings people to a certain knowledge of these things. To enforce the duty of tenderness to the poor, the inspired Lawgiver referred the children of Israel to their own past experience: “Ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt” [Ex. 23:9]. He who hath been a stranger amongst unkind people or under their government who were hard-hearted, knows how it feels; but a person who hath never felt the weight of misapplied power comes not to this knowledge but by an inward tenderness, in which the heart is prepared to sympathy with others.”

John Woolman, [A Plea for the Poor](#), page 3

"How we view the world depends on where we stand. If we stand with the wealthy, we will contemplate the world from the heights of privilege and domination. If, however, we stand with those who are poor and marginalized, oppressed and persecuted, then we shall contemplate the world from the experience of suffering and injustice. From this bottom-up perspective, we have a better chance of glimpsing the world as God does.”

John Dear, [Living Peace](#), page 127

“God is already there. As Friends, we participate in what God is doing. We don’t claim that we are bringing God to a godless place or an “unreached” people. God is already at work in every place and already has a relationship with every people group. We are invited to join in and participate in God’s mission as witnesses to God’s love.”

Eden Grace, [Good News to the Oppressed](#)

“How can we love God, whom we have not seen, if we cannot, in time of crisis, find the way to love our brothers whom we have seen?”

Bayard Rustin, [In Apprehension How Like a God!](#)

Queries - Choose whichever are appropriate for you, a mix of queries that approach the range of human experience (emotional, intellectual, personal stories) often work best

Ancestors and our Inheritance

What is a person, or a group of people, who came before us that we are thankful for?
What did they do and how have you benefited from their work?

What does being a good ancestor mean to you in the present moment? What actions have you taken that you can see its effects rippling out to future generations? What is an action you’d like to take, and what kind of support would help you to take that action?

What’s an inheritance you’ve received that you would not like to pass on to future generations? How has it affected your life and what steps can you take to not pass it on?

What values would you bring to bear on the transfer of wealth across generations?

Institutions

What’s an institution (cultural, political, economic, legal, educational, media, etc.) that you are grateful for? Share a story of where this appreciation comes from.

For that institution you are grateful for, what kinds of actions helped it to become how it is today? What’s an action you can take to support it?

Seeing through Another's Eyes

Share a time when you felt like you were a stranger. What happened and was there anything anyone did that made you feel welcome?

When you think of the “enemy,” who comes to mind? What feelings come up when you think of them? How would you like to relate to those feelings?

Who do you see as disenfranchised in your society? Short of being them, what are steps you could take to better understand their perspective?

Suggested practice for the next week:

In gratitude for the next generation, reflect on the gifts of someone younger than you. Affirm them in person or send them a note doing so.

Gratitude for Earth - Adults

This guide contains many resources. We recognize that every community's needs are different, so feel free to pick and choose what works best for you.

Key goals and ideas

Just as we have successfully been in partnership with fellow humans, we can be in fruitful interdependence with Earth.

There are examples in human history, and in our own lives, of people and communities living in right relationship with Earth.

We already have the seeds of knowledge for living in healthy interdependence.

Preparation

Discern which (if not all) of the readings and quotes you want to use.

Choose queries to ask and plan for how you will use them (possibilities are explored [here](#)).

Introduction

In a garden, we witness the partnership between soil and seed. The soil provides a foundation, moisture, and nourishment to the seed, and as the seed germinates and grows, its roots help hold the soil in place to prevent erosion and shades the soil from being baked by the sun. One is not seen as superior to the other. Between humans, we also seek to partner with one another in this same spirit. For example, Right Sharing of World Resources works in partnership with women's groups in Guatemala, India, Kenya, and Sierra Leone. Colonial and modern narratives suggest people from these countries are "less than" in various ways. This idea makes it harder to have a mutual partnership. The relationship between humans and Earth faces greater challenges. Stories of human supremacy and domination over Earth are deeply embedded in many of our cultures.

What learnings from partnerships within our human family can we bring to bear onto a living recognition of our interdependence with Earth, our wider ecological community, that humanity and Earth might live together like soil and seed?

Readings and Quaker Quotes

“Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: ‘I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you—the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you—every living creature on earth.’”

Genesis 9:8-10

“But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish in the sea inform you. Which of all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind.”

Job 12:7-10

“Interdependence is the law of our universe. Community was written by God into the nature of things. Our planet is a delicately balanced eco-system in which everything is interdependent. Earth puts forth grass, trees, plants in endless variety, all giving out oxygen which animals need: Animals in turn breathe out carbon dioxide and provide manure which plants need. Earth has many recycling systems of land, air, and water, powered by the sun, all members one of another, a marvelous unity with diversity... why cannot we live in harmony with Gaia, our planetary Earth Mother?”

Elizabeth Watson, [The Cool Green Hills of the Earth](#)

“We have no autonomy, no integrity as a species separate from the other species of this world, no collective existence as a creature apart from the animate Earth. We can understand ourselves, and feel what it is to be human, only through our interaction and engagement with all these other, nonhuman beings with whom our lives are so thoroughly tangled. And yes, of course we can and indeed do feel a deep solidarity with one another, and with the rest of our kind. Yet we cannot stretch that bodily empathy out to all of our single species except by way of the more-than-human Earth. We cannot extend our senses to the whole of humankind without the sensitive and sentient Earth getting us there. It is this vast and sensitive sphere, glimmering with sensations, that grants us that ability to feel and resonate with one another, to ache when another aches—whether it be a small girl hospitalized in Iran or a young elephant whose mother was killed by poachers, whether an old man struggling to breathe in China or an aging sea lion snagged and tangled in a fishing net. Our real collective Flesh is not that of ‘humankind’ as an autonomous abstraction, but is the living Body of this biosphere, breathing. That’s us.”

David Abram, [In the Ground of Our Unknowing](#)

“We’re *never* going to have respectful and reverential relationships with the planet – and sensible policies about what we put in the air, the soil, the water – if very young children don’t begin learning about these things literally in their houses, backyards, streets and schools. We need to have human beings who are oriented that way from their earliest memories.”

Elise Boulding, [Concentrating On Essence](#)

Queries - Choose whichever are appropriate for you, a mix of queries that approach the range of human experience (emotional, intellectual, personal stories) often work best

Who were the people who lived on this land before we did, and how did they live and care for the earth?

What do we know about partnerships that can help us care for the Earth?

How is partnership between human beings different from how we can be in relationship with Earth? What’s the difference between partnership and interdependence?

Share an experience where you feel you’ve been in a mutually beneficial relationship with Earth. This could be with a place, an animal, or a plant, for example.

How has a landscape formed you? For example, grasslands, valleys, rivers, hills, mountains, sky, even concrete, pavement, glass, and buildings (being alive in their own way) and the community of non-human beings that make up that landscape. Does that place impact your life now?

What are the challenges of practicing simplicity in caring for the Earth?

What’s a community, in the present or in the past, that you see as living in recognition of its interdependence with Earth? What actions do you see that you can emulate?

Where do you see an opportunity to live in deeper recognition of our interdependence with Earth and what would be the first steps for doing so?

Suggested practice for the next week:

Organize a group to pick up trash on a walk together, and choose a few of these queries to discuss together while on the walk