

9 TIPS FOR FOSTERING GRATITUDE THROUGH STORYTELLING

\$50M A 2023 study found that movies incorporating character strengths in stories generated on average \$50 million more globally compared to those that did not.

DID YOU KNOW? Gratitude is the feeling of being thankful and appreciative, whether it's a general outlook on life or a response to a specific person, thing, or experience.

Extended adolescence, which includes ages 10-24, is a critical period of development when young people gain independence and form their values.

ADOLESCENCE AND GRATITUDE

1 Show adolescents expressing gratitude for family and relationships.

Why? There are two major ways to express gratitude: tangibly, as in giving a material gift; and intangibly, as in voicing appreciation out loud. For teens, expressing gratitude intangibly enhances their mental health (e.g., decreases negative self-thoughts, enhances mental well-being) more than tangible expressions.



Research insight: In a 2021 survey, very few U.S. teens chose "being rich" as a core value (10%), whereas two-thirds of the sample chose as core values "having close friends" and "being involved in your community" (66% and 67%, respectively).

2 Portray diverse characters being kind to each other.

Why? When viewers witness diverse characters demonstrating kindness, generosity, and love, it can lead to a greater appreciation of diversity, a stronger sense of connection to others, and more positive attitudes toward different racial and ethnic groups.



Research insight: Hate crime incidents in the U.S. increased by 11.6% from 2020 to 2021, with a majority (63.1%) of these incidents driven by prejudice based on race, ethnicity, or ancestry.

3 Show adolescents expressing gratitude even in challenging situations.

Why? Encouraging a general disposition of gratitude, where teenagers express gratitude regardless of the situation, can reduce the likelihood of engaging in risky behaviors such as early sexual activity or drug use.



Research insight: A 2022 survey of workers worldwide found that 60% of employees rarely express gratitude toward coworkers, with some doing so as infrequently as once a year.

CONNECTING GRATITUDE TO GENDER, CULTURE, AND DISABILITY

Different life experiences can impact people's comfort with expressing and exploring gratitude. Below, we offer guidance on exploring gratitude from various perspectives so storytellers can accurately and inclusively portray how gratitude may appear across various identities.

DID YOU KNOW? When content is created from a research-informed perspective, it better supports adolescent mental health. Stories that reflect **Authentically Inclusive Representation (AIR)** deliver stronger financial returns and a positive impact on Gen Z audiences.

GENDER AND GRATITUDE

4 Show family, teens, or community groups offering support and affection to young male characters, particularly when they express vulnerable emotions.

Why? A strong support system can increase feelings of gratitude in adolescent boys.



Research insight: Men are twice as likely as women to associate gratitude with indebtedness (an obligation to repay a benefit).

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5 Show tough male characters engaging in emotionally vulnerable conversations and expressing gratitude for their male friends.

Why? More boys than girls report being isolated. Boys with close male friendships are more likely to avoid depression and live longer lives.



Research insight: Men who feel they must always be tough are 6-7 times more likely to bully other men.



RACE, CULTURE, AND GRATITUDE

6 Show diverse characters expressing gratitude in culturally authentic ways.

Why? In collectivist cultures, expressing gratitude is a common practice. Tangible expressions, like offering help or making food are more prevalent than intangible expressions, like saying "thank you."



DID YOU KNOW?

Individualistic cultures (most common in Western countries) often prioritize individual well-being over group well-being. Collectivist cultures (most common in Eastern countries) often prioritize group well-being over individual well-being.

Research insight: In 2020, White characters accounted for 81.2% of U.S. TV screen time (including broadcast, cable, and streaming services), despite making up 58.9% of the U.S. population.

7 Show characters who accept and are grateful for diverse viewpoints.

Why? Teens tend to feel a greater sense of belonging when their gratitude practices include both non-judgmental acceptance and appreciation for others' identities, behaviors, and personal qualities.



Research insight: By portraying diverse experiences, media can debunk the misconception that gratitude is solely the simple feeling of appreciation for one's own life.



DISABILITY AND GRATITUDE

8 Avoid using tropes that depict characters with disabilities as helpless or inspirational solely due to their disability.

Why? People with disabilities deserve respect and recognition for their individuality rather than being defined solely by their disability.



Research insight: In a 2017 study, over one-third of employees with disabilities reported feeling underestimated or left out.

9 Allow characters with disabilities to express frustration when their basic needs aren't met.

Why? Individuals with disabilities may experience "access fatigue," feeling pressured to express excessive gratitude for basic services, which can lead to exhaustion.



Research insight: In 2020, 65% of curb ramps and 48% of sidewalks in the U.S. were inaccessible to people with disabilities.