



NEWSLETTER

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Walking in Wildwood

Fall is a perfect time for a family walk and mini-adventure. Wildwood Park in Radford (pictured here) is just one example of the numerous trails and parks in the New River Valley to take advantage of. Chances are, there's one near you!

Take time to appreciate the changing landscape. Stop and notice the different shapes and colors of leaves. Pay attention to the 'crunch' under your feet. Enjoy the moment - these are the ones that matter! (Photo - M. Wade/NRVCs)

Take time to be thankful

Fall is here! It is a favorite season among many as we admire and appreciate our natural surroundings and cooler weather, enjoy delicious and comforting foods, create fun and whimsical decorations, and hopefully take time to pause and reflect prior to the busy holiday season ahead.

A personal favorite holiday for many is Thanksgiving – which brings to mind food, but more importantly, it is about giving thanks. If the year of 2020 has taught us one thing, it should be to give thanks for what we have been given. Rather than focusing

on what has been taken away or what others have that we don't, giving gratitude has an incredible positive effect on not only our minds and our relationships, but our bodies as well!

As you read through our fall newsletter, we hope that you are able to pause and reflect on what you are grateful for. Take time to talk with your children and families about gratitude, and find some time to relax together to show gratitude - or even pay it forward by helping a friend or neighbor.

Happy Fall, y'all!

The power of gratitude

By **Rene' Cox** | NRVCs Behavioral Health Wellness Specialist

Experiencing challenging situations and tough times are all part of living. No one gets a pass on avoiding life's trying moments. Whether it is a financial difficulty, an employment problem, health issues, family loss, or troubles caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, we all experience hardships. These life experiences may leave us physically, mentally and emotionally drained. So, what is an effective means of dealing with these tough times and building resilience? Gratitude.

Gratitude is defined as being grateful and having a mindset of thankfulness. Practicing a grateful mindset will help you weather life's storms. It is a process, that in order to be effective, must be worked on daily. It's about reframing the situation and finding a positive aspect to focus on. That one action of looking for and finding the "silver lining" can change a mood, perspective and ultimately attitude. By modeling an outlook of gratitude, our children will learn to do the

same, resulting in lifetime benefits!

According to Dr. Jeff Thompson, Associate Research Scientist at Columbia University Medical Center, "One key aspect of resilience is having gratitude practices." His research concluded that gratitude has an impact on overall mental health. These practices help re-wire our brains to become more positive and resilient. Having a positive outlook helps reduce stress levels and can increase good mental and physical health.

It is important to note that gratitude does not change the fact that you are going through or have gone through tough times. It does not erase trauma, but it can ease the burden you experienced. Gratitude creates a mental armor that protects the individual and helps them cope when life situations happen. That is, it boosts resiliency.

How does someone start practicing grat-

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Teaching kids gratitude has long-term benefits

By Caroline Mullins

NRVCS Behavioral Health Wellness Specialist

While the Thanksgiving holiday is a wonderful time to teach our kids how to make cute turkey crafts and teach them a bit about what it means to be thankful, it is becoming more evident that acts and lessons of gratitude 365 days a year are significant in improving our mental health, wellbeing, and even life successes.

It is clear that teaching our children gratitude will benefit them in the long run. According to a 2008 study published in the *Journal of School Psychology*, grateful children tend to be happier, more optimistic, and have better social support. They also report more satisfaction with their schools, families, communities, friends, and themselves. Grateful kids also tend to give more social support to others as well.

So how do we teach gratitude? Here are a few strategies that can help your kids feel more grateful:

Teach your child to say “Thank you”

The simple act of telling someone thank you is a great first step in learning gratitude. This prosocial behavior is a step for young children to recognize when others have given them something. As they grow, encourage thank you notes or pictures to show others their appreciation. If your child is involved in extracurricular activities, encourage them to always thank their coach or teacher after each practice session. And of course, always model desired behavior. If your child is extremely shy, they might have trouble at first. But with time and proper modeling, they will warm up to showing gratitude.

Talk About It

There’s no better dinner conversation than talking about the things we are grateful for. Researchers from the University of North Carolina offer four components of gratitude that are helpful conversation starters:

1. Noticing – What do you have in your life to be grateful for? Are there things to be grateful for beyond the actual gifts someone has given you? Are you grateful for any people in your life?

2. Thinking – What do you think about this present? Do you think you should give something to the person who gave it



A simple act

As your children get older, encourage them to write thank you notes, make cards or share photos to show their appreciation. It’s a habit that will serve them well throughout the course of their lives! (Photo - M. Wade/NRVCS)

to you? Do you think you earned the gift?

Do you think the person gave you a gift because they thought they had to or because they wanted to?

3. Feeling – Does it make you feel happy to get this gift? What does it feel like inside? What about this gift makes you feel happy?

4. Doing – Is there a way to show how you feel about this gift? Does the feeling

you have about this gift make you want to share this feeling by giving to someone else?

Create a Family Gratitude Project

You can start by making a Thankful Tree by following the instructions in this edition of “Make It Fun” or you can find endless possibilities online.

Establish Gratitude Rituals

Make it a daily habit to express and encourage your kids to show gratitude. Perhaps at breakfast to begin the day, or at bedtime to end the day on a positive note. Find the same time each day to ask your child to identify what they are thankful for. Making gratitude habitual ensures that children practice it on a regular basis, and it can become second-nature.

Making gratitude a habit in your home will not only benefit your children for years to come, but it may also brighten your own spirits when you are having tough days.

While it is normal for kids to feel a sense of entitlement at times, it is important that we turn those times into teachable moments and work on new gratitude strategies.

Before long, the ungratefulness will fade and everyone will have a sunnier disposition.

Gratitude

From Page 1

itude? To begin, a person needs to identify and then reflect on the positive, or find the “silver lining” in the challenging situation they are facing.

Dr. Thompson recommends that the positive aspect or “silver lining” be recorded in a journal or notebook, and then write in a few words why there is thankfulness. Each day, look for different things that you can be grateful about or thankful for. By consciously looking for the positive in situations, in time, your brain will be re-wired and positivity will precede negativity. Resilience is being created and allowed to mature.

“Life is not fair,” is a true statement. Challenging situations, tough times, and uncertain outcomes are all part of life experiences. However, if the line reads, “Life is not fair, but I have my health, my family,

my faith, and my ability to deal with this,” then the impact of thankfulness is recognized, the outlook is positive, and resilience is strengthened.

Gratitude works! Start practicing today.

BSF Feedback

Do you have feedback or parenting questions? Email Leslie at lbeasley@nrvc.org or Caroline at cmullins@nrvc.org.



The Building Strong Families newsletter is published by NRVCS Community Wellness & Outreach

MAKE IT FUN! with Caroline



"The Thankful Tree"

This simple project is a great way to make note of the things you are thankful for - and to help your kids practice gratitude!

You will need:

- Jar or vase
- Sticks
- Scrapbook paper or construction paper
- Hole punch
- Ribbons or string
- Grateful hearts

It's that easy! Be as creative as you want and take joy in reminding your family of what they should be thankful for.

Photo: Caroline Mullins / NRVCS

In the Kitchen

Leslie's Comfort Food Corner: Pumpkin Bread

3 1/3 cups all-purpose flour
3 cups sugar
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
4 beaten eggs
1 1/2 cups mashed pumpkins (15 oz. Libby's canned pumpkin)
2/3 cup milk
1 cup vegetable oil

Optional – 1/2 cup chopped pecans

In large bowl, stir together flour, sugar, baking soda, and spices.

In medium bowl, combine pumpkin, milk, eggs and oil. Add to dry ingredients. Mix well.

Grease and flour (or use Baker's Joy baking spray w/ flour) two 9x5 loaf pans.

Bake at 350 degrees for 55-60 minutes.

Hint: For moist bread, let cool for approximately fifteen minutes.

Wrap in plastic wrap, then foil for 3-4 hours until bread is cooled.



Dee's Delicious Dish: Roasted Pumpkin Seeds

Roasted pumpkin seeds are fun and simple to make with your kids, especially after you just finished carving your pumpkin. They also make for a healthy snack!

INGREDIENTS

- seeds from a pumpkin
- olive oil spray
- kosher salt

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Remove the seeds from the pumpkin, and clean off any pumpkin debris.

2. Wash the seeds and lay them out on a baking sheet overnight to dry.



3. The next day, pre-heat the oven to 250°.

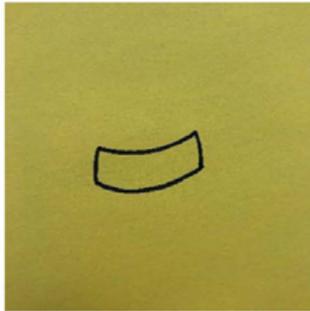
4. Spread the seeds out evenly and lightly spray with olive oil spray and season with salt to taste.

5. Roast the seeds in the oven until the seeds become golden brown, about 1 hour and 15 minutes.

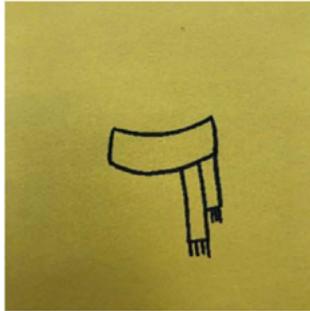
Let them cool and enjoy!

DRAW IT! with Caroline

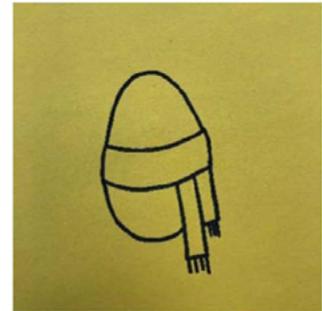
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall!



Step 1



Step 2



Step 3



Step 4



Step 5



Step 6



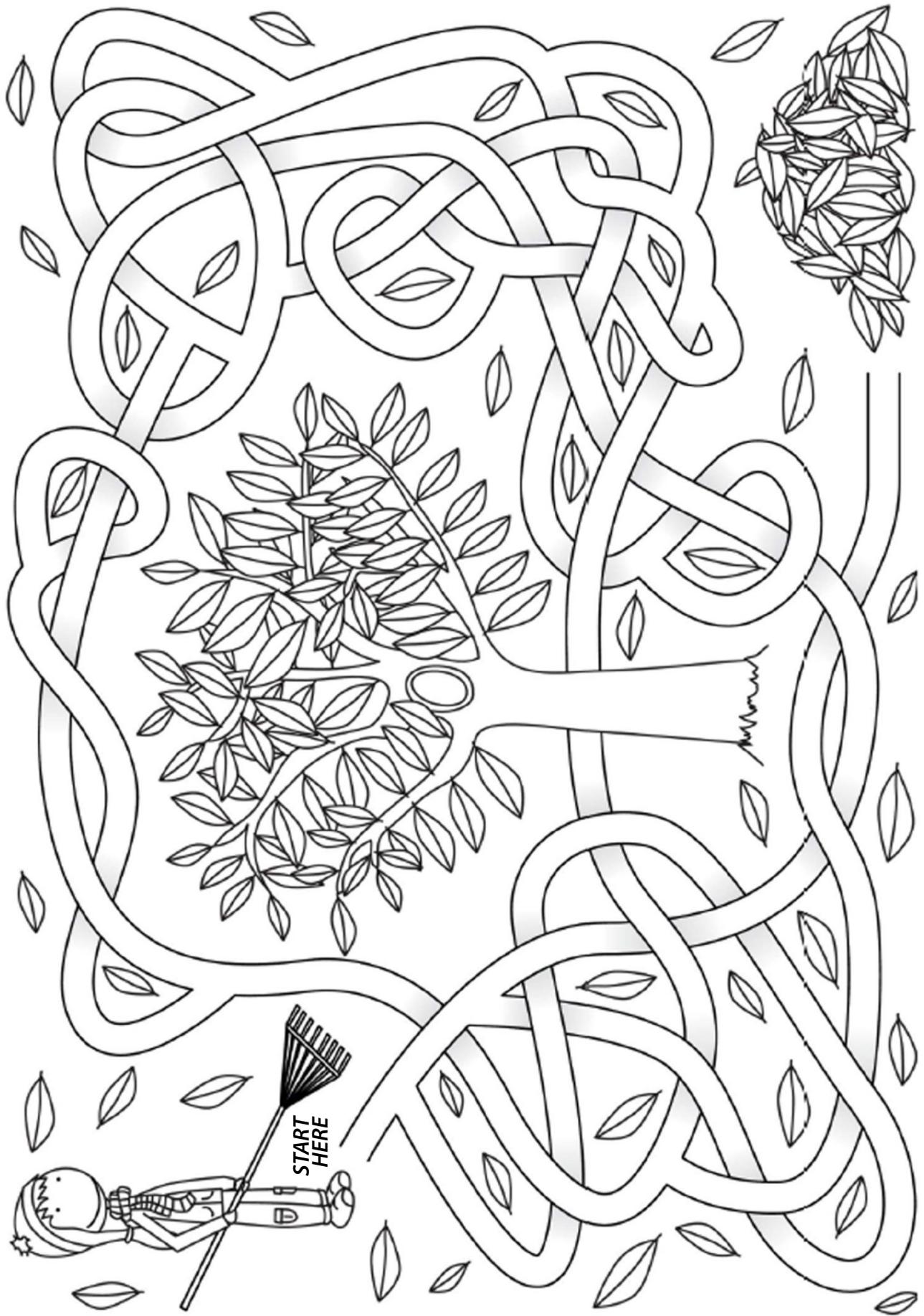
FINISHED!

Jenelle's Twisters & Tricksters

Use the colors of fall to dress up this Thanksgiving turkey!



Can you find your way through the maze?





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Are you interested in joining one of our upcoming sessions?

Contact Leslie Beasley at lbeasley@nrvc.org or 540-250-1814 to stay informed about dates and additional details!

Our next 8-session class starts January 2021!

(Note: Sessions will be virtual until further notice)

FAMILY

“Like branches on a tree, we all *grow* in different directions. Yet *our roots* remain as one.”

- Unknown