

Educating Students about Benefit Appraisals

Middle School

High school

Elementary Education



Intervention Overview

Educating students about benefit appraisals (costs vs. benefits) encourages them to notice the helpful intentions of others, the benefits of gifts they have been given, and the sacrifices made by others. Froh et al. (2014) recommends that students be taught about benefit appraisals using a five lesson curriculum. The outline of the curriculum includes an introduction and brief overview of benefit appraisals (Lesson 1), understanding one's motivation for helping another (Lesson 2), understanding the cost involved in helping another (Lesson 3), understanding the benefits of receiving a gift or service from another person (Lesson 4), and a review session of all topics covered (Froh et al., 2014). It may be possible to combine or simplify the lessons for different grade levels and time constraints. Lessons should include writing assignments and role-playing activities (Froh et al., 2014). The Greater Good Science Center at the University of California-Berkeley suggests a few additional activities during a benefit appraisal lesson. One activity is to have students keep a gratitude journal to list costs to someone who has done something nice for them, as well as the benefits they receive because of this sacrifice (GGSC, n.d.). Additionally, as part of the lesson, students could read the short story "The Gift of the Magi" and analyze the costs and benefits to the characters in the story for their acts of kindness (GGSC, n.d.). Examples of benefit appraisal lessons can be found by visiting the articles in the references section below.

Intervention Guide

Grade Level:	Upper elementary-12th
Materials:	Varies, student journals for note-taking and writing activities recommended
Duration:	At least one 30-50 minute lesson, additional lessons recommended for greater effectiveness
Implementation:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Using the curriculum guides below, teach a short lesson, or a series of lessons about benefit appraisals to your students2. Encourage students to keep a journal to write down the costs and benefits of gifts and services they receive from others

Does it work?

In one study of 4th graders, students “received instruction on the social-cognitive perceptions that elicit gratitude (i.e., benefit appraisals)” every day for one week (Froh et al., 2014, p. 135). These lessons helped teach children to recognize the helpful intentions of others, the sacrifices others made to serve them, and recognize the benefit of the gifts bestowed by others to them. After noticing increases in participants’ measures of gratitude and grateful behavior, the researchers repeated the study. This time they spread out the curriculum so that lessons were taught once a week for 5 weeks. As a result of these studies, researchers concluded, “The treatment condition was effective in altering appraisals of perceived intention, cost, and value of interpersonal benefits . . . [the treatment] condition exhibited growth in benefit appraisals (i.e., grateful thinking) over time” (Froh et al., 2014, p. 145). Both interventions also increased participants’ sense of gratitude and appreciation for others, as well as positive emotion (Froh et al., 2014).

A more recent study assessed a benefit appraisal intervention for its effectiveness at improving gratitude, hope and prosocial behaviors among young adults (Baumsteiger et al., 2019). The benefit appraisal lesson was also combined with a gratitude letter and three good things activity. Among 16-18 year old participants, the intervention improved their ability to appreciate the blessings they have that may have previously been taken for granted. Most of the participants were also more likely to feel gratitude towards others and express their gratitude more often following the intervention. Finally, some participants also reported an improvement in life satisfaction (Baumsteiger et al., 2019).

References:

- Baumsteiger, R., Mangan, S., Bronk, K.C. & Bono, G. (2019). An integrative intervention for cultivating gratitude among adolescents and young adults. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 14(6), 807-819.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2019.157935>
- Froh, J.J., Bono, G., Fan, J., Emmons, R.A., Henderson, K., Harris, C., Leggio, H. & Wood, A.M. (2014). Nice thinking! An educational intervention that teaches children to think gratefully, *School Psychology Review*, 43(2), 132-152.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02796015.2014.12087440>
- G.G.S.C (n.d.) *Thanks! A strengths-based gratitude curriculum for teens and tweens*. Greater Good Science Center.
https://ggsc.berkeley.edu/images/uploads/GGSC_Gratitude_Curriculum_MS_HS.pdf





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