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The 9 in 9 Theory

9 minutes, 9 things — a short daily gratitude practice built to help a stuck, negative mindset shift, one small redirection at a time.

The Idea

Each day, spend about **9 minutes** speaking or writing about 9 things you're grateful for. The idea rests on a simple premise: intentionally directing attention toward the positive can shift the "energy" a child brings into their day — not by ignoring what's hard, but by giving the brain regular, deliberate practice at noticing what's good.

Why this is genuinely harder for some brains

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The brain science, in plain terms

Research on gratitude practice links it to increased activity in the brain's reward pathways, along with dopamine and serotonin — the same chemical systems tied to mood, motivation, and a sense of contentment. The shift isn't instant from a single session; it's the daily repetition that gradually makes noticing the positive feel more automatic. "9 minutes" is a practical guideline to aim for, not an exact clinical threshold.

How to Practice It

1. Pick a consistent time — right before bed, at breakfast, or as a transition ritual — so the habit builds daily, not just when things are already going well.
2. Say it out loud or write it down. Either works — choose whichever the child will actually do without resistance.
3. Keep it small and specific. "I'm grateful for my lunch box — my mum remembered to pack my favourite snack" does far more than a vague "I'm grateful for my family."
4. Let feelings show up alongside the gratitude. "I'm grateful for my soccer coach — he put me in goalie this week because he believes I can do it, and I really enjoy soccer" links the gratitude to a real, felt moment.
5. If 9 things feels like too much — especially for younger children — scale it down. Try 3 or 5 to start, and build toward 9 as the habit gets easier. Consistency matters more than hitting the number.

What it can sound like

- "I'm grateful for my lunch box — my mum remembered to pack my favourite snack."
- "I'm grateful for my soccer coach — he put me in goalie this week because he believes I can do it. I really enjoy soccer."
- "I'm grateful my friend saved me a seat at lunch today."

Simple starter prompts

- Something small that made today easier
- A person who helped me, and how
- Something I'm looking forward to
- A moment I felt proud of myself
- Something about my body, my home, or my things that I'd miss if it was gone