A Thankful MyPlate

Objective: To learn about MyPlate and make healthy choices.

Age Range: All ages

Hands-on Activity: Use the MyPlate template to express what you are thankful for.

Life Skills: HEAD = decision-making, learning to learn; HANDS = self-motivation, responsible citizenship; HEALTH = healthy lifestyle choices; disease prevention.

Introduction

Did you know that Thanksgiving has been a Federal holiday for less than 100 years? We often focus Thanksgiving’s history on the original gathering of Pilgrims and Wampanoag Indians at Plymouth approximately 400 years ago (November 1641 to be specific according to History.com). However, the first national celebration of Thanksgiving was declared by the Continental Congress in 1777 when the American colonies were embroiled in the Revolutionary War. (During George Washington’s first term as President of the United States, he also called for a national day of thanksgiving and prayer in 1779.) Following the Union’s victory at Gettysburg in 1863 (almost 100 years later), President Lincoln set the precedent of an annual proclamation of a Thanksgiving Holiday. Each year after, U.S. Presidents proclaimed the fourth Thursday in November as Thanksgiving. However, to stimulate the economy at the end of the Great Depression and give shoppers one more week to buy gifts between Thanksgiving and Christmas, President F. D. Roosevelt moved Thanksgiving back one week to the third Thursday in November between the years of 1939 and 1940. In 1941, Congress insisted on the traditional fourth Thursday and made it a permanent Federal holiday (History.com). Today, Thanksgiving is often celebrated by a meal with friends, family, and a little bit of football.

Many traditions related to Thanksgiving go a step further than simple fellowship over a meal by focusing on gratitude and reflecting on things for which we are thankful. This month’s activity keeps that spirit in mind as we explore MyPlate.

Watch this video from Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue about MyPlate: https://youtu.be/W7_i5tY-5BY

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Activity Materials
- Printed MyPlate Coloring Sheet
- Writing utensil
- Coloring utensils (optional)

Activity Instructions
1.) Use the blank MyPlate Coloring Sheet to write down and/or draw a picture of one food item in each food group for which you are thankful. Refresh yourself on the food groups by visiting ChooseMyPlate.gov if needed.

2.) Once you have completed that step, you can take the reflection one step further by writing down one additional thing that you are grateful for from this past year. (If you need ideas, check out the Gratitude Scavenger Hunt.)

3.) Share at least one thing from this activity with another person in order to spread the holiday cheer and spirit of gratitude to others.

OPTIONAL: Check out this MyPlate Holiday Meal Makeover from USDA and brainstorm ways you can improve the nutritive quality of your holiday foods and still enjoy the wonderful tastes of the season.

Conclusion
While this activity is quite simple, it helps to build real connections between our actions and our health and wellness. It is important to understand MyPlate (and implement simple strategies to improve the nutritive quality of the foods we eat) for physical health, just as expressing gratitude on a regular basis is for mental health. Daily doses of positive thinking can influence our mindset to improve our mood and level of happiness long term, which is one more thing to be thankful for!

Additional Resources:
- USDA. MyPlate Printed Educational Resources. https://www.choosemyplate.gov/resources/myplate-tip-sheets
- South Carolina 4-H @ Home. 2020. Gratitude Scavenger Hunt. Daily 4-H @ Home Lesson Idea. https://mcusercontent.com/041393bcef12bd1bc45222def/files/ab7ab1642d2a4bfe9372-1ca0442bc3ca/Gratitude_scavenger_Final.01.pdf