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**March:
Luck, Blessings, and
Gratitude**

Navigate Adolescence

Pathways Yoga

Luck, Blessings, and Gratitude:

Begin by sharing the following:

With St. Patrick's Day comes the phrase "Luck of the Irish." People think about the Irish as being lucky because of the legend of Leprechauns. The legend goes ... that if you are lucky enough to meet/catch a Leprechaun (who was a wee little man with magical powers and the ability to find the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow) that he will give you a piece of gold from the pot of gold as long as he is allowed to remain free.

Outside of encountering a leprechaun, and getting a "wee bit of gold," ask the group if they can think of a time when they have been lucky? (When they won a contest or raffle, or you found something, or something wonderful and surprising turned up?)

Ask the group if anyone can think of a time when something happened that just made you feel lucky? (Like when a friend shared something with you such as tickets to a fun event, or someone invited you on a special outing?)

Continue to share that those times when something good and unexpected happens to us, we tend to be thankful and think we are "lucky." That feeling of thankfulness is a common theme of yoga.

In yoga that feeling is called gratitude.

Yoga encourages us to cultivate an attitude of gratitude. Does anyone know what that means? (It means to be intentionally aware and notice those things for which we are grateful.)

Here is an excerpt from an article in *Yoga Journal* that describes this idea of cultivating or practicing gratitude:

(Read or paraphrase the following excerpt to the girls)

"Practicing mindfulness of gratitude consistently leads to a direct experience of being connected to life and the realization that there is a larger context in which your personal story is unfolding. Being relieved of the endless wants and worries of your life's drama, even temporarily, is liberating. Cultivating thankfulness for being part of life blossoms into a feeling of being blessed, not in the sense of winning the lottery, but in a more refined appreciation for the interdependent nature of life. It also elicits feelings of generosity, which create further joy. Gratitude can soften a heart that has become too guarded, and it builds the capacity for forgiveness, which creates clarity of mind."

Continue:

Share that the next step in gratitude practice is to actively notice things you are grateful for throughout your regular day. Give them the example: Say you are sitting in a class that is boring and it is making you tired and annoyed. Instead of focusing on being bored, tired and annoyed, try noticing instead that you are actually grateful that you have an opportunity to get an education, that there are people who have dedicated their lives to instructing and encouraging young people and in the end you will be better for having had the opportunity to learn.

Tell them that they can do this not just once or twice, but a hundred times each day. They can do so not to get out of a bad mood or to be a nicer person, but with the intention of clearly seeing the true situation of your life. That class can remain boring, but the inner experience of how their life is unfolding begins to shift. They will slowly you become clear about what really matters to them, and there is then more ease in their daily experience.

Inform them that cultivating gratitude is an example of what is considered a mind/body connection in yoga. Yoga is about creating peace and calm in our mind and in our bodies and practicing gratitude can take us from that feeling of misery to that feeling of peace.

Next, introduce the exercise in mindful gratitude. (Pass out the hand-out.) Tell them that you are going to challenge them to be mindful of all the things that they are grateful for this week. On the hand-out there is a section for each day of the week where they can write down different things that they are grateful for each day of the week, or they can write down a time when they mindfully changed their perspective – such as the example of being grateful for a chance to learn in the middle of a boring class.

Sum up the lesson reminding them that like the Leprachaun, we sometimes have to go looking for the gold nuggets, or the good things in our lives that we feel lucky about – those things that give us gratitude or thankfulness. But like anything we do – the more we practice something, the better we become at it and the more able we are to see the gold right in front of us.

Hand-out

Pass out the hand-out and have them fill out today's section. Depending on the time left – if willing, you can share what you have written down for the day, and ask them to do the same.