

purposeful Living

Gratitude helps us affirm, celebrate, and magnify the good present in our lives.



“He is a wise man who does not grieve for the things which he has not, but rejoices for those which he has.”

— *Epictetus*

Reflecting on what we’re grateful for is a powerful way to rise above ourselves and enrich our day-to-day. But what exactly is gratitude? Leading gratitude expert and researcher, Robert A. Emmons, defines it in two parts:

- “An affirmation of goodness; we affirm that there are good things in the world, gifts, and benefits we’ve received.”
- “We recognize that the sources of this goodness are outside ourselves. We acknowledge that other people — or even higher powers, if you’re of a spiritual mindset — gave us many gifts, big and small, to help us achieve the goodness in our lives.”

Practicing gratitude has social, physical, and psychological benefits. Research shows that gratitude is consistently associated with greater happiness, improved health and immune response, strengthened relationships, and resilience in the face of adversity. What’s more, gratitude, like a sense of purpose, helps to enlarge ourselves and connect us to something bigger.

This holiday season will look different than previous ones, but gratitude can help. We invite you to focus on two of the many positive outcomes of a practice of gratitude: relationship strengthening and a shift in perspective/outlook. In a time where we may be distanced from loved ones, acknowledging those who matter most through heartfelt words or a simple note of thanks can be powerful for both recipient and sender.

Cultivating an attitude of gratitude can help you face adversity and give you a semblance of control. That's because noticing the little things that are going right, even in uncertain times, builds you up psychologically. Doing this, the research says, will help you weather the hard times and more thoroughly enjoy the good times.

Gratitude is a skill that can be practiced and the rewards are immediate. Here are some ways to get started.

Create a Gratitude Jar

It's a visible reminder to pause and give thanks. Every time you feel or experience gratitude, jot it down on a slip of paper and add it to the jar. From time to time revisit and reread your notes for a gratitude boost.

Look for the Silver Lining

Look back on a difficult time in a positive light. Search for anything of value that came out of it. Are there present situations that you can do the same for?

Picture This

Reflect on 3–4 people or things that consistently create a warm sense of gratitude in you. Picture them in as much detail as you can, then write them down along with a few words about why you appreciate each. Take it a step further and share your words of appreciation!

Savor Your Senses

It is incredible what our bodies allow us to experience — sights, smells, tastes, sounds, and tactile experiences abound. Your senses can be sources of gratitude. Take a moment to pause and appreciate what the present moment is offering you.

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