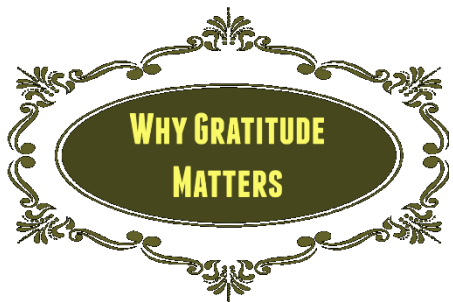


Create More Gratitude: Activities & Tips



Benefits of Gratitude

For the individual:

- increased happiness and positive mood
- more satisfaction with life
- less materialistic
- less likely to experience burnout
- better physical health
- better sleep

- less fatigue
- lower levels of cellular inflammation
- greater resiliency
- encourages the development of patience, humility, and wisdom

For groups:

- increases prosocial behaviors
- strengthens relationships
- may help employees' effectiveness
- may increase job satisfaction

(from the Greater Good Science Center, "The Science of Gratitude", 2018)

Emmons & Mishra (2011) explored many of the above benefits in "Why gratitude enhances well-being: What we know, what we need to know." They concluded that there is "considerable evidence that gratitude builds social resources by strengthening relationships and promoting prosocial actions." As you continue reading, you will discover more support for making gratitude a habit.

Please know, some challenges are larger than these simple gratitude activities. You can't self-care yourself through mental health problems like anxiety or depression or through external factors such as trauma or systemic oppression. If you are struggling with significant challenges the University of Iowa has professional resources to support you. Start here to find resources: <https://mentalhealth.uiowa.edu/>

1. Write down at least 3 things you are grateful for. Post these someplace and read them regularly.

Noting what we're grateful for trains our minds to focus on the positives in life. Our minds like to dwell on all that is wrong (or could go wrong). Experts repeatedly say noting what is positive or writing down 2 or 3 things we are grateful for, increases happiness and reduces stress. Try it and see what happens! It takes very little time.

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/ten_ways_to_become_more_grateful1

2. Send a note of thanks or gratitude to someone.

Send an email, post a note on social media or hand write a note. What's most important is that it's sincere and specific. Need more guidance:

<https://positivepsychology.com/how-to-express-gratitude/>



3. Spend 15 minutes doing something kind or enjoyable for yourself.

Self-care is important to maintaining healthy relationships with yourself and with others. It means reducing stress by doing things to take care of your mind, body, and emotions. This enhances our ability to live fully, vibrantly, and effectively. The practice of self-care often reminds you and others that your needs are valid and a priority.

Ideally, we're all engaged in regular self-care, doing activities that make us feel cared for mentally, physically, and emotionally. But when we're busy, this doesn't always happen, and we may need to stop and take the time to remind ourselves that we are important, too. Learn more: <https://stopthehurt.org/making-self-care-a-priority/>.

So take 15 minutes to engage in something enjoyable as self-care; try to find those activities that best support you and do them regularly. Here's some ideas if you need them:

- Sit outside and enjoy nature
- Listen to your favorite play list
- Take a soothing shower or bath
- Read just for enjoyment
- Use a foam roller, tennis or other small ball to roll out tight muscles
- Journal
- Plan a trip (even if you can't/won't really go)
- Draw, paint, play music, sing or engage in some other creative activity
- Make a list of your personal strengths
- Get a mini-massage (from a friend or professional)
- Wrap up in a favorite blanket and do nothing
- Smooth on lotion
- Find some positive affirmations to post where you can see them often
- Try Kristin Neff's free self-compassion meditations:
<https://selfcompassion.org/category/exercises/#guided-meditations>

4. Do a favor or task for someone or give them a small treat (something unanticipated) or do a random act of kindness.



Giving to others often brings good feelings to both the giver and the receiver. Who can you make feel good today – that also makes YOU feel good?

Want to know more or need ideas? Check out these resources:

<https://positivepsychology.com/random-acts-kindness/>
<https://www.randomactsofkindness.org/kindness-ideas>

5. Make a list of 5 activities that bring you joy; do at least one.

Self-care is so important! This is another self-care activity. When you care for yourself, you have more resources for caring for others. Take time today to do notice what brings you joy and do something joyful! See 3 above for ideas or check out these resources for simple ideas:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/now-is-everything/201106/50-ways-add-joy-your-day>
<https://www.mindfulness-project.org/2020/03/10/bring-more-joy-in-your-daily-life/>
<https://www.lifehack.org/articles/money/30-absolutely-free-activities-that-can-make-you-happy-today.html>



6. Support someone in need. Volunteer, make a donation, or reach out to someone who is having a rough time and offer support.

Helping others helps them and is a good thing to do, but it also makes us happier and healthier too. Giving provides connection to others, creates stronger communities and builds our self-confidence. There are many ways to give - our time, ideas, energy, skills, things (especially those we no longer need or want) and of course, money.

If you need help finding opportunities:

Student org website: <https://imu.uiowa.edu/students/httpsleadandserve-uiowa-edunew-page/> and <https://getinvolved.uiowa.edu/campus-programs/>

Volunteer opportunities: <http://foundation.uiowa.edu/volunteer/> or <http://volunteer.unitedwayjwc.org/>

More info on supporting others:

<https://www.actionforhappiness.org/10-keys-to-happier-living/do-things-for-others>
<https://dosomethingcool.net/helping-others-life/>

More Resources:

<https://www.happify.com/hd/the-6-skills-that-will-increase-your-well-being/>
<https://positivepsychology.com/category/gratitude/>
<https://www.studentsagainstdespression.org/making-changes/the-importance-of-self-care-and-self-compassion/>
<https://www.lifehack.org/articles/communication/40-simple-ways-practice-gratitude.html>

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