



Create a **season of gratitude**

The holiday season can be a time of great joy. It can also be a trying time.

Sharing time with family and friends, exchanging gifts and celebrating creates good feelings.

However, for some, it's a challenging time. Perhaps you're missing loved ones who are no longer with us. Maybe you're not where you want to be in your career or relationship. In these cases and many more, the holiday season can be a trying time.

Feeling grateful often comes naturally when your life is going well. It's the more difficult times when it may become harder to find. Practicing gratitude in your toughest moments can have a positive effect on your mood. This is when it's most important.

How gratitude affects the body

Your nervous system kicks in to decrease the stress hormone cortisol¹ when you're thinking about what you appreciate or feel gratitude for. Your body also increases the "feel-good" chemical oxytocin, which helps improve your mood. When your mood improves, you may feel more motivated to do things you enjoy.

If you find yourself struggling, try some of these gratitude practices below.^{1,2}



Make a gratitude list

Take some time to list everything you're grateful for—no matter how big or small. You can be grateful that the sun rose this morning, for example. Keep this list handy for a time when you may need a pick-me-up.

Journaling

Pick one thing you're grateful for and write about it. Give yourself a time limit, and don't stop until your time's up. This also creates a touchstone for later.

Thank someone

Think of something someone has done for you recently. Write them a personal note, send a text, or even better, reach out to thank them in person. Not only do you feel good about thanking them, but they will also get a jolt of good feeling too.

Be sense-ible

Get in touch with your senses—touch, see, smell, taste and hear. Be mindful of your environment as you go about your day. Think about one thing you appreciate through each sense. Perhaps it's the feel of water on your skin, the smell of coffee or the sound of children's laughter.

Look inward

Utilize self-reflection. "Naikan" is a practice from Japan³ that revolves around asking three questions:

- ✔ What have I received?
- ✔ What have I given?
- ✔ What troubles or difficulties have I caused?



Gratitude can create a positive feedback loop for your mood and behavior. It can also help you handle stress better and may even reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Coping with complex emotions all at once is not easy. There is rarely a one-step solution.
Creating a daily gratitude practice can help.

Not a Livongo member? See if you're eligible for personalized health support at **Go.Livongo.com/HEALTHYCOUNTRY/New**.

¹<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/being-your-best-self/202010/practicing-gratitude-is-more-important-now-ever>

²<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/gratitude>

³<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/becoming-solutionary/202011/giving-thanks-when-you-re-not-feeling-it>

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