

LIVING GRATEFULLY!

In just a few weeks, many Americans will gather with friends and family to give thanks. It's a time of reflection and anticipation as the year winds down, a time to see our loved ones all in one place around a table of mismatched chairs, and it's a time when many of us express gratitude for the things and people in our lives. But what happens once the leftovers are put on standby for round two, after the table leaf is put back in the closet, and the "kids table" is gone? In principle, we're still grateful after we get up from the table and when Thursday turns into Friday, yet we tend to give intentional thanks only when the calendar says we're supposed to. Thankfully, research continues to prove that a lifestyle of gratitude has many benefits, so let's explore why every day should be Thanksgiving.

The benefits of being grateful

That warm and fuzzy feeling you get on the official day of giving thanks isn't just the turkey's tryptophan effect. According to the positive psychology approach, several studies have shown that a lifestyle of gratitude offers the following benefits:

- Greater resistance to stress and depression
- More positive outlook on life
- Enhanced optimism
- Increased happiness and satisfaction
- Improved quality of sleep
- Enriched relationships
- Boosted energy
- More peace of mind
- Increased ability to remain present
- Heightened patience, humility, and insight

Uncovering everyday appreciation

- **Keep a gratitude journal.** Using a notebook or an app on your phone, set aside time each week to jot down what you're grateful for. Not only does this practice keep you more present, having a log of the good things in your life makes it hard not to see how lucky you really are.
- **Acknowledge everyday sources of happiness and satisfaction.** Whether it's the bus driver who waited when she saw you rushing to the stop, finding the perfect gift for a friend, having a spare lightbulb on hand, or even a patched-up pothole, take the time to appreciate all the little things that made your day better.
- **Express appreciation.** We all say thank you throughout the day, but how often do we actually show that we're thankful? All it takes is a little detail. Let the person know why you appreciate what they've done, how it helped you, or the way it made you feel. And remember that quality counts more than quantity. For example, rather than showering a person with individual thank-yous for the plans they suggested, the reservations they made, and the invitations they sent, tell them how much you appreciate the effort they always make to get everyone together.
- **Focus on fortunes, not failures.** Humans are hardwired toward negativity, often dwelling on what went wrong or wasn't done, and assuming the worst. If you find yourself feeling regretful or disappointed, or you begin to ruminate over something you can't change, refocus your thoughts on the positive aspects of the situation or conversation, and look for opportunities for growth.

A lifestyle of gratitude takes conscious effort, humility, and a bit of vulnerability, but the benefits it can have on your health, well-being, resilience, and relationships with others are well worth it. Take the time to truly appreciate someone or something today, and when someone shows appreciation for you, pay it forward by thanking someone else.

To learn more information about the benefits of giving thanks year-round, call the EAP for guidance and resources.

The EAP is a voluntary and confidential employee benefit available to federal employees and their family members at no cost.



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