

When we make a choice to find something to be grateful for, we begin the process of paying attention on purpose, turning off our default mode negativity bias and growing parts of our brain that include reward centers, moral cognitions, fairness and justice.

## WAKE UP GRATEFUL

What is the first thought that goes through your mind when the alarm rings? Try opening the day with gratitude – for the breath in the body, for the body in the bed, for the sun showing itself reliably again, even just for the privilege of waking up!

## SET AN INTENTION TO PRACTICE

Gratitude is not inborn, but it is developable. Set an intention to practice daily. The use of a gratitude journal is a good start. Families can create a “Gratitude Jar” and each night at dinner or bed write an entry to place in the jar. During hard times, reread your journal or draw a few jar entries to re-read. Then take 15 + seconds to savor the memories.

## HAND-WRITTEN THANK YOU NOTES

Thank you notes need not be reserved for birthdays and holiday gifts. Write them to anyone at work, school, church who has offered an act of generosity. Thank someone for taking the time to listen, for helping lift a heavy object, the neighbor who brought in your garbage cans, the co-worker who supported your project and efforts in a meeting. Taking the time to write a note invites us to slow down and savor the event and the receiver slows down to savor the impact of generosity.

## REFRAME YOUR TO-DO LISTS

Our To-Do lists can feel overwhelming at times. A gratitude reframe could be just what’s needed for an attitude change. We often breathlessly say; “I have to do xxx, I have to do yyy, and then I have to do zzz.” Phew! What would it feel like if we looked at our list in a way that reflected gratitude, generosity and impact. “I’m grateful I get to do xxx for Suzy because it supports her education. I’m grateful I get to do yyy for Frank because it will give us more time together. I’m grateful I get to do zzz because I love providing nutritious meals to keep everyone healthy.” If an item on your to do list doesn’t fit this criteria, perhaps it needs to be scrapped.

## MENTAL SUBTRACTION

We can sometimes get so lost in the complaining mind we lose track of the benefit we might receive from the object or person that is the subject of our complaints. The next time the refrigerator is not keeping temperature – “Another repair bill, time spent I don’t have, spoiled food....” Think “what would my life be like without a refrigerator?” Come up with a few solid imaginings. Then ask which is more inconvenient repairing the refrigerator or having no refrigerator at all? Gratitude often blossoms from this mental subtraction inquiry. With relationships, when someone in your family is annoying you...imagine what life would be like if they were gone?

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