



Gratitude Journaling and Your Health

Gratitude journals have become popular in recent years. This might be due, at least in part, to the wealth of research showing a beneficial link between journaling and health.

Researchers define gratitude journaling as “writing on a regular basis about things, people, and events one feels explicitly grateful for.” The format isn’t as important as the consistency of practice.

Here are just a few ways gratitude journaling¹ can support your wellbeing:

Improved Sleep

Gratitude journaling has been associated with better sleep. In one study², researchers found that journaling for two weeks improved sleep quality. If you struggle with falling or staying asleep, journaling about what you are thankful for may be a helpful strategy.

Reduced Inflammation

Another study³ found a link between gratitude journaling and reduced biomarkers for stress and inflammation. This is important because inflammation has been tied to an increased risk for heart disease and other chronic conditions.

Reduced Aggression

Keeping a journal may also help reduce aggression related to hurt feelings. Some research suggests that gratitude journaling is protective against the kind of emotional distress that often leads to aggressive reactions.⁴

Increased Optimism

Increased optimism has been tied to journaling as well. Focusing on what you are grateful for helps you see the positive aspects of your life more clearly.

Strengthened Relationships

There is also evidence that gratitude journaling can improve the quality of relationships. People who express gratitude frequently tend to feel more comfortable voicing concerns earlier in relationships. This helps resolve issues before they become a bigger problem.

In summary, numerous studies have shown that gratitude journaling has the potential to improve emotional wellbeing, quality of life, relationships, and overall life satisfaction. To better support your wellbeing – and the wellbeing of the people you care about – express gratitude often.

1. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2019.1651888>
2. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1359105315572455>

3. <https://doi.org/10.1097/PSY.0000000000000316>
4. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550611416675>



6 Ways to Express Gratitude

Gratitude is an expression of appreciation. It is an acknowledgment of kindness that can be an extremely powerful form of positive reinforcement.

It has been described as an emotion, a temporary feeling⁵, and a personality trait, but some believe it to be much more than that. Gratitude is one of the most effective tools for building successful teams and organizations. To cultivate a more collaborative culture in the workplace⁶, gratitude needs to play a central role.

Being grateful has also been associated⁷ with greater happiness and increased⁸ life satisfaction.

Here are some easy ways to express gratitude:

Say Thank You

Everyone likes to be acknowledged, and saying 'thank you' is one of the easiest ways to do so. This simple gesture can go a long way to building rapport and trust in relationships.

Write a Gratitude Letter

Thank you notes are another way to express gratitude. When you write a letter, be sure to include what the other person did to deserve your thanks.

Make a Gratitude Visit

If letter writing is not appropriate, consider making a face-to-face visit to express your gratitude in person.

Start a Gratitude Journal

The expression of gratitude does not always have to involve another person. Journaling offers a safe space for you to express your gratitude privately.



Give a Gift

Gift giving can also be a gesture of kindness. Similar to writing letters, whenever you give a gift, be sure to include a note explaining the reason behind it.

Do a Random Act of Kindness

If the source of your gratitude is not specific to a single person, you could opt to do a random act of kindness to brighten someone else's day instead.

The expression of gratitude does not have to be complicated. A few thoughtful words or actions are simple ways to show others how much you appreciate them.

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

6. <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/>

7. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/healthbeat/giving-thanks-can-make-you-happier>

8. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02480>



What is Toxic Positivity?

Most people understand the value of maintaining a positive mindset, but the belief that we should always be positive has many mental health experts raising red flags.

The term ‘toxic positivity’ refers to minimizing⁹, denying, or invalidating negative feelings. Psychologists describe¹⁰ it as “the excessive and ineffective over-generalization of a happy, optimistic state across all situations.”

Unfortunately, positivity is not as effective as many believe. When we suppress or ignore negative feelings, they can intensify. That is why mental health experts often advise against adopting a “good vibes only” sentiment, which can be damaging to your relationships and to your wellbeing.

Here are a few tips to help you avoid toxic positivity.

Acknowledge All Emotions

Pretending everything is okay when life feels hard only prolongs negative emotions. When you allow all emotions to exist without judgment, you can process them more easily and focus your efforts on solutions.

Listen Without Fixing

Most of us have a natural tendency to want to help others, whether it be through advice giving or attempting to remedy the situation directly. The problem with this approach is that it communicates to the other person that you do not believe they are capable of solving the problem on their own. When someone you care about comes to you with a problem, focus on listening rather than fixing.



Ask Questions

Asking questions is a good way to demonstrate active listening. The next time a friend comes to you with a problem, try asking them this question: “What can I do that would be the most helpful for you right now?” Questions encourage honest dialogue and the open expression of emotions, even the negative ones.

Moving away from toxic positivity and toward a healthier form of positivity can make all the difference in your personal relationships and your health.

9. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-man-cave/201908/toxic-positivity-dont-always-look-the-bright-side>

10. <https://thepsychologygroup.com/toxic-positivity/>

Peanut Butter Oatmeal Cookies with Chocolate Chips

Ingredients

- 2 cups old-fashioned or regular rolled oats
- ½ cup cane sugar* (may sub coconut sugar)
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ¼ teaspoon sea salt
- 2 whole eggs
- ¼ cup unsalted butter, softened (may substitute coconut oil for dairy-free)
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 cup natural peanut butter, room temperature or heated slightly to achieve pourable consistency
- ¾ cup dark or semi-sweet chocolate chips

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line two sheet pans with parchment paper.
2. Combine the ingredients in a medium bowl, except for the chocolate chips. You can also use a stand-up mixer. Mix until well combined.
3. Fold in the chocolate chips.
4. If the dough is real sticky, let it sit for 5 minutes or place in the fridge.
5. With a small cookie scoop, scoop dough onto pans to make about 2 dozen cookie. With hands, slightly flatten each cookie dough mound to form a round cookie shape.
6. Bake for 10-15 minutes or until cookie centers are done and outsides are golden. Baking time will depend on the size of the cookies. Start with 10 minutes and add time as needed.
7. After removing from the oven, let the cookies set on pan for 10 minutes before transferring to a cooling rack.

Prep Time	Cook Time	Servings
10 minutes	10 minutes	30



Nutrition Facts

Per cookie

Calories	135
Fat	9g
Sodium	65mg
Carbohydrate	13g
Fiber	2g
Sugar	5g
Protein	4g