



WELLBEING TOOL

Southampton-based life coach and wellbeing expert Carolyne Bennett tells *Living* why it's so important to express gratitude during this difficult time

A major step in creating a peaceful and fulfilling life is cultivating an 'attitude of gratitude'. An attitude of gratitude means making it a habit to express sincere thanks and appreciation in all areas of your life, on a regular basis, for both the big and small things that you experience.

It is a feeling that is often spontaneous but can also be deliberately created to experience feelings of warmth and goodness from within.

Every day won't be perfect, but focusing on what you're grateful for tends to be an effective strategy in washing away feelings of stress, anger and negativity and helps you to stay calm and peaceful.

With the increasing stressors of modern day living, many people are turning to such

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practices to create and maintain positive feelings and mindset. Gratitude creates a sense of connectedness and community which helps people to feel supported through life.

Why gratitude matters

Studies have shown that gratitude improves physical health and grateful people experience fewer aches and pains. People who are

grateful report feeling healthier and are generally more optimistic than those that do not have a regular gratitude practice according to a 2012 study published in *Personality and Individual Differences*.

Grateful people tend to live healthier, happier and more fulfilling lives. Gratitude improves mental health by reducing a multitude of toxic hormones and increases dopamine, oxytocin and serotonin production. These are crucial neurotransmitters responsible for our emotions and make us 'feel good'. The production of these 'feel good' hormones encourages your brain to seek out more of the same. These hormones enhance our mood immediately, making us feel calm and happy from the inside and with a consistent practice, gradually builds over time.



One study carried out by American researchers (Emmons and McCullough, 2003) assigned one group of young adults to keep a daily journal of things they were grateful for and they assigned another group to journal about things that annoyed them. The group assigned to keep gratitude journals felt better in their lives as a whole compared to the other group.

Cultivating an attitude of gratitude

Life is much better if you develop an attitude of gratitude but how do we do this?

Dedicating a specific time every day to

your practice will help establish a routine. List the things you are grateful for silently in your mind or assign a journal for your gratitude log.

This simple practice is done for just a few minutes morning and/or night and if you want to establish this as a regular activity you can start by doing your daily gratitude for a minimum of 21 consecutive days while you build this healthy daily habit in to your schedule. **1**

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Try it for yourself with this easy gratitude process

1. List three things you're grateful for that have happened in your life in the past, and the reason why you're grateful for them. These could be things like a meaningful gift you received, holidays you have been on or a helping hand when you needed it most.
2. List three things that you are grateful for in this current moment, and why. For example, 'I'm really grateful to have my phone so I can stay in contact with my friends and family' and 'I'm really grateful for the roof I have over my head that keeps me safe and secure.'
3. How does being grateful make you feel? Take a moment to become aware of how gratitude makes you feel.

Gratitude tips

- Say 'thank you' to other people when they do something kind for you, no matter how small the deed.
- If you have a relationship that needs an energy boost, think of 10 things you're most grateful for about the person.
- Start a gratitude journal. Express gratitude in this journal every night by noting the things that you're grateful for, proud of, and excited about that happened throughout the day. Include the gratitude process listed above.
- Acknowledge yourself for what you have accomplished in your life and what you're grateful for about yourself.

