**Start a Gratitude Journal to Be Thankful Year Round**

Not feeling very thankful this Thanksgiving season? You probably have more to be grateful for than you realize. But the stress of the holidays and the seemingly non-stop run of bad news in the world can make gratitude hard to come by, harming your mood, and your health.

Starting a gratitude journal can give you a new perspective on life and improve your outlook as you prepare for a new year. Follow this three-step process to cultivate a gratitude mindset and find a journaling routine that works for you.

**1. Unplug from the news cycle.**

If you feel like there's more bad news than good news lately, you're probably right. But not because the world is any more unsettled than it was during, say, the Great Depression, World War II, or even after 9/11. There are just so many more ways for us to consume news these days. And several studies have found that [negative headlines and news stories grab and hold consumers' attention longer than positive ones](https://www.forbes.com/sites/lindsaykohler/2023/04/12/bad-news-is-hard-to-resist-use-it-to-your-advantage/?sh=466afaf75344). It's in the media companies' best interests to pump up the negativity: more bad news means more viewers, readers, clicks, ad sales, and profits.

We could all use a little less screen time in our lives. But if you're trying to be more grateful, unplugging more often could help you turn down the negativity and be more attuned to the positive.

**2. Say, "Thank you!"**

[According to a recent study](https://nhahealth.com/neuroscience-reveals-gratitude-literally-rewires-your-brain-to-be-happier/), just saying "Thank you!" can start a chain reaction of good vibes that could improve your physical and mental wellness. Gratitude can stimulate the areas of the brain that modulate our moods and release neurochemicals that make us feel better. [Studies have also linked gratitude to lower stress and depression and stronger feelings of social connectedness, including between married couples](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/evidence-based-living/202311/giving-thanks-how-gratitude-strengthens-relationships#:~:text=Showing%20gratitude%20to%20loved%20ones,satisfaction%20with%20their%20sex%20life.).

Many folks learn to say "Thank you" by exploring more dedicated, inward acts of mindfulness. Meditation, exercise, prayer, and self-reflection can provide an inner calm that will help you brush aside negative distractions and focus on what's most important in your life.

The outward effects of expressing your gratitude can be even more impactful. Telling strangers and loved ones alike that you appreciate them can put more goodwill out into the world and send more coming back your way. You might also start to become more aware of things you should be grateful for that you take for granted, or that get drowned out in all the negativity buzzing off your phone. Even simple, every kindness like a smile from your barista or a hug from your spouse could start to stand out a little bit more and make you more appreciative.

**3. Capture your gratitude every day.**

A gratitude journal can take many different forms. Your phone comes with note-taking apps that you can use to write about happy moments throughout the day. You could also use your phone to create an audio or video diary. Several studies have found [that we remember things better when we write them down by hand](https://www.lifesavvy.com/19204/why-you-remember-things-better-when-you-write-them-down/); the tactile experience of putting pen to paper stimulates different parts of the brain, improving recall.

Perhaps just as important as the medium you choose is the time and space you give yourself to work on your gratitude journal. You could make journaling a part of your morning or nighttime routine. Or you might jot down some thoughts and feelings over your lunch break. Find a quiet moment that's all yours so that you can feel more thankful for all that you have.

If gratitude becomes a bigger part of your daily life, you might want to find ways to incorporate gratefulness into your Life-Centered Financial Plan. Let’s talk about what you’re most thankful for and how our process can help you experience more of the good things in life in 2024.