

# Cultivating An Attitude of Gratitude

*COVID-19 has upended everybody's life, but finding gratitude offers both physical & emotional benefits*

By Stephanie Dufner, Freelance Writer



Image Link: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/women-s-white-cardigan-3317232/>

*Courtesy of Eternal Happiness via Pexels*

November marks **National Gratitude Month**, an annual designation whereby people can give thanks for the positive aspects of their lives.

This idea may seem difficult in today's world given the immense social, economic, and psychological impact the coronavirus has had worldwide. To date, nearly 235,000 Americans have died from the pandemic. Millions of Americans have lost work and could eventually lose their homes due to lack of steady income. As scientists around the globe seek to find safe treatments and a cure, public health experts expect infection rates to skyrocket in the coming months.

"We went down to the lowest point lately in early September, around 30,000-35,000 new cases a day. Now we're back up to (about) 50,000 new cases a day. And it's going to continue to rise," said Dr. Peter Hotez, Dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine in [a recent interview with CNN](#).

These stark facts can cause some to expect the worst scenarios occurring during the approaching winter months. In addition, [some experience feelings of loneliness or depression](#) during the November and December holidays. COVID-19 will also cause millions of Americans to forgo their travel plans to spend Thanksgiving with their loved ones, possibly increasing thoughts of seasonal sadness. For some, social distancing will give way to feelings of social isolation.

"The last time we got together for a family gathering was during my husband Chuck's birthday in February," says Sylvia Crew, a retired Chief Financial Officer, public speaker, and resident of Simi Valley, California. "Month after month I have longed to see family—my stepson and his wife and their two children, who call me Grandma Syl. Not being able to go anywhere but to the grocery store or on two to four walk in my neighborhood was wearing me down."

Kasey Sirody, an Attorney who works in Ventura, California, has also dealt with stressors due to the coronavirus. "All of the life changes that have come about by COVID have caused me significantly increased anxiety, as I am sure it has many other people."

In spite of these challenges, both Crew and Sirody express gratitude for the many blessings in their lives.

### **Benefits of Gratitude**

[Research highlights](#) some key benefits of developing a sense of gratitude. These includes the following:

- Improved physical health
- Increased mental strength
- Greater psychological health
- An enhanced sense of empathy and fewer feelings of aggression
- Higher self esteem
- An ability to make new friends

The power of gratitude “allows us to celebrate the present; it diverts our attention from toxic, negative emotions, such as envy, resentment and debilitating regret; and science shows that grateful people have a greater sense of self-worth,” says writer Lucy Purdy of [Positive.News](#).

Over the past few months, Sirody has reflected on the things that bring her bliss during these trying times.

“I am so grateful that I have my health and the ability to get outside for hikes and walks in the fresh air with my pup. I am also grateful for my friends who bring positive spirit to my world and have really used the opportunity to spend less time with toxic people and expend more energy on those who bring comfort.”

Crew also appreciates her good health, loving family, and having the ability to communicate with her fellow church members and Toastmasters via Zoom meetings.

“To be grateful for just the simplest thing elevates our thought and brings about joy,” she says. “I took some of my ‘happy’ stones and placed them around my neighborhood as well as some Charlie Brown-inspired cartoons, taping them on the fences. I liked doing that!”

### **Taking Action**

According to Harvard Medical School, people can foster gratitude [through various practices](#).

- Sending a “Thank You” note to someone who has performed an act of kindness.
- Remembering something good that has recently happened.
- Praying or mediating to express a sense of thanks.

Another option: consider making a contribution to a charity seeking to improve the lives of others. [Global Team Corona Busters](#) always seeks donations of cloth — gently-won sheets or fabric — or monetary gifts.

Regardless of the practice, science and anecdotal evidence indicate that those who seek and exhibit gratitude in turbulent periods will discover a newfound sense of grace and understanding.