GRATITUDE HEALS
A WORKBOOK FOR INSPIRATION AND GUIDANCE

Supporting Healthcare in a COVID-19 Crisis

Gratitude Heals™ Supporting Healthcare in a COVID-19 Crisis
www.drwoaching.com
Gratitude Heals™
A Workbook for Inspiration and Guidance
Supporting Healthcare in a COVID-19 Crisis
Special Edition

A recent article published by the American Medical Association - Understanding and Addressing Sources of Anxiety Among Health Care Professionals During the COVID-19 Pandemic, noted: “the importance of simple and genuine expressions of gratitude for the commitment of health care professionals and their willingness to put themselves in harm’s way for patients and colleagues cannot be overstated.” (JAMA 2020).

“I cannot pretend I am without fear. But my predominant feeling is one of gratitude.” ~Oliver Sacks, M.D.
To all healthcare professionals, scientists, environmental safety and health experts – all front-line, essential employees in the service industry around the world - We Are Grateful for your efforts in leading us through this time of uncertainty!
Introduction
Being on the front-line of the COVID-19 pandemic may be impacting you as a healthcare leader, caregiver, or other essential staff in these ongoing crises. Add just one degree of separation and, if your healthcare facility has not yet experienced a surge of COVID patients, your work may now be remote—and staying at home has become your contribution to flatten the curve of infection rates. Regardless of where you are on this continuum, you are likely still experiencing some levels of fear, stress, and anxiety brought on by the sheer uncertainty of the pandemic.

The design of this special edition of *Gratitude Heals – A Workbook for Supporting Healthcare in a COVID-19 Crisis* gives you immediate access to information that will inspire and guide you as you continue your essential work during these challenging times. The content is based on the science of gratitude and supporting insights from the fields of neuroscience and positive psychology. The gratitude exercises will further heighten your awareness of the associated health and well-being benefits. In the final section, there are recommendations to broaden and amplify a practice of gratitude in your workplace. Additional resources are available at the back of the workbook if you wish to delve deeper into the current research and evidence-based practices.

It is my hope this workbook will help start or strengthen your gratitude practice. Embracing a personal gratitude practice offers adaptive coping techniques critical for addressing the stress and anxiety that may be associated with your work, your health, and the health of your COVID-19 patients, coworkers, family, and friends. You can move through this workbook page by page or start with any one of the nine sections to build greater resilience and strength. It’s through my own personal journey through grief and the healing benefits of gratitude that I am confident you’ll begin to feel a shift in your thinking, find glimmers of hope, and retain the enthusiasm of your chosen profession.

Your journey of renewal and greater health and well-being starts here. Print out this entire PDF or print a few pages at a time to fit your schedule or routine. Please, freely share this workbook with anyone you know who will also benefit from the exercises and resources.

As always, your feedback is welcomed and appreciated. Kindly take a few minutes to forward your thoughts, insights, likes, ideas, and any additional information you would like to see included. Email me at lburton@drwcoaching.com

In Gratitude, Linda Roszak Burton

If you are overwhelmed by stress and difficult challenges, seek help from a health professional. If you are in crisis, an additional resource may be the toll-free, 24-hour National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255).

If you or someone in your family is facing mental and/or substance use disorders, seek help from a health professional. An additional resource may be the toll-free, 24-hour Substance and Mental Health Services Administration at 1-800-662-HELP (1-800-662-4357).
“Gratitude bestows reverence, allowing us to encounter everyday epiphanies, those transcendent moments of awe that change forever how we experience life and the world.” ~ John Milton
Helpful Quotes

“Interrupt anxiety with gratitude.” ~Danielle LaPorte

“Feeling grateful to or appreciative of someone or something in your life actually attracts more of the things that you appreciate and value into your life.” ~Christiane Northrup, M.D.

“Living a life of gratitude is healing energy.” ~Unknown

“When we are no longer able to change a situation – we are challenged to change ourselves.” ~Viktor E. Frankl

“Healing does not mean the damage never existed. It means the damage no longer controls you.” ~Akshay Dubey

“Acknowledging the good that you already have in your life is the foundation for all abundance.” ~Eckhart Tolle

“What flows through your mind sculpts your brain.” ~Rick Hanson, Ph.D.

“Gratitude is a vaccine, an antitoxin, and an antiseptic.” ~John Henry Jowett

“Gratitude is one of the most medicinal we can feel. It elevates our moods and fills us with joy.” ~Sara Avant Stover

“A grateful mind is a great mind, which eventually attracts to itself great things.” ~Plato

“The deepest craving of human nature is the need to be appreciated.” ~William James

“At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.” ~Albert Schweitzer

“When it comes to life, the critical thing is whether you take things for granted or take them with gratitude.” ~G. K. Chesterton
What Is Gratitude?

“Gratitude is an affirmation of goodness and a recognition of goodness outside of ourselves.” ~Robert A. Emmons, Ph.D.

Gratitude has been defined as a strength, a memory of the heart, a pathway to greater health and well-being, and the parent of all virtues. To live gratefully, to have a broader orientation toward gratitude, has been linked to a stronger bond with your local communities, more satisfying relationships, and greater resilience in the face of adversity and trauma.

Research shows a sustained practice of reflecting and expressing gratitude leads to benefits including strengthening of your immune system, reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety, improving quality of sleep, and contributing to the recovery of those who have Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Practicing gratitude gives you hope, strength, energy, wisdom, and the serenity to meet life's many challenges of grief, anxiety, depression, loneliness, and fear.

About the phrase, a practice of gratitude: creating a sustainable practice of gratitude takes personal discipline and is something cultivated over time. And, thanks to neuroplasticity -- the brain’s ability to form new neural connections -- your practice will strengthen existing brain pathways as well as create new ones. Practice will help you to place more attention on what is going right and to learn to express what you are grateful for, strengthening those positive neural connections.

Keep in mind that gratitude is not indebtedness. If you feel beholden to someone or even a group or organization who has done something for you, the benefits of gratitude are stifled. And finally, gratitude is never about what you have that someone else does not. It’s not a competitive sport!

How do you define gratitude? List as many definitions as possible.

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______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

Do you consider yourself to be a grateful person? If so, explain why.

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

If you currently have a gratitude practice, please capture those techniques on the lines below.

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

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When Getting to Gratitude is Hard – Three Good Things

“In the struggle ends when gratitude begins.” ~Neale Donald Walsch

In times of devastating events such as the pandemic, it may feel like practicing gratitude is out of place or unachievable. Thinking about what you’re grateful for may bring on feelings of guilt or that gratitude as an emotion is impossible to consider. The most cited reason for feeling grateful by research participants’ was their health and the health of family members (80%). So, it’s no wonder why many find it hard to practice gratitude during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Yet, having a grateful perspective on life can help you cope, build greater personal resilience, and greatly benefit you in this type of situation. Psychologists define resilience as a commitment to finding purpose in whatever’s happening, believing in your ability to create a positive outcome, and being better prepared for the inevitable setbacks that occur.

If you are finding it hard to practice gratitude during this crisis, consider starting with a simple reflective practice of Three Good Things (3GT). This simple practice can lead to significant improvements in how you approach and feel about your health and well-being. A 3GT study done with clinical and non-clinical healthcare workers showed significant improvements from baseline in emotional exhaustion and depression symptoms (Sexton et al., 2018).

In the space below, or in a journal or notebook, capture your reflections of three good things over the past 24 hours: positive interactions you had, positive emotions you felt, and positive thoughts. Explain the causes. Try to do this each day/night for two weeks, preferably at bedtime. If you miss a day, it is OK, try again. You may want to find a gratitude buddy or family member who can do this with you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Three Good Things</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>3</td>
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</table>
Gratitude for the People in Your Life

“We must find time to stop and thank the people who make a difference in our lives.” ~John F. Kennedy

What prompts you to feel grateful to someone? Perhaps they went out of their way to help you with something or offered an act of kindness. Most people consider themselves to be grateful but have a difficult time taking the next step to express it. Your 24/7 distractions are one of the most common obstacles to taking this next step.

Here’s an outline to help you express gratitude to a family member, coworker, or friend. (This can be a helpful guide when writing a thank you note to someone, and you’re struggling to find the words.)

1. Name the person and the experience or behavior you feel grateful for.

______________________________________________________________________________

2. Describe specifically how you have benefited.

______________________________________________________________________________

3. Describe specifically why this was meaningful.

______________________________________________________________________________

4. Describe specifically the intentions, actions, strengths, and possible sacrifices made on your behalf.

______________________________________________________________________________

Take a moment and decide how you will share your expression? (Example – write a note, mail it, or read it to them face-to-face or by phone.)

What date will you do this? ________________________________________________

After you have expressed your message of gratitude to this person, come back to this page and capture the following:

How did you feel?

______________________________________________________________________________

How did they respond?

______________________________________________________________________________
The Heliotropic Effect of Gratitude

“If you concentrate on finding the good in every situation, you will discover that your life will suddenly be filled with gratitude, a feeling that nurtures the soul.”
~Rabbi Harold Kushner

Researchers often refer to the heliotropic effect of gratitude. This effect refers to the tendency of every living organism to move toward the light and away from the dark -- toward the positive and away from the negative.

Focusing on the good in your life (life-giving energy) through reflecting and expressing gratitude creates greater abundance and well-being and makes you healthier (Emmons & McCullough, 2003).

When getting to gratitude is hard considering how difficult life is during this COVID-19 pandemic, think about using a practice technique called “remembering the bad.” This healing practice helps you turn toward life-giving energy and create a more grateful perspective.

Remembering the bad involves considering a previous time in your life that was difficult for you. Write down a few key memories of that time.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Looking at that experience in the rear-view mirror, who and what resources helped you through that difficult time? Perhaps it was a family member, friend, coworker, college professor, mentor, or boss. A resource could include meditation, books on tape, music, videos, or a sermon.

Who__________________________________________________________________________
What_________________________________________________________________________

Consider where you are today and the difficult challenges you’re facing due to COVID-19. Reflect on how you can tap into the same or similar resources to help you through this time.

Who can you reach out to? What is your next step to reach out?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

What resources can you tap into?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
Gratitude as a Strength

“The science of positive psychology is defined as the scientific study of how strengths enable individuals, communities, and institutions to thrive. Just as being fearless is not the absence of fear, positive psychology does not imply the absence of pain and suffering or denying negative events. What’s more, the science defines gratitude as a strength and is considered one of the key strengths for human flourishing. By drawing on this strength and creating an awareness of what is going well in your life, your positive emotions, your positive relationships, and your well-being combine to enable you to truly flourish.

Additionally, positive psychology suggests using your strengths in the service of something larger than yourself is the strongest contributor to well-being. No doubt, the meaningfulness of your work during this pandemic has called upon all your strengths. What strengths have you noticed about yourself?

______________________________________________________________________________

A recent article published by the American Medical Association - Understanding and Addressing Sources of Anxiety Among Health Care Professionals During the COVID-19 Pandemic, noted: “the importance of simple and genuine expressions of gratitude for the commitment of health care professionals and their willingness to put themselves in harm’s way for patients and colleagues cannot be overstated.” Leaders are called on to express gratitude to help overcome the negative impact of these enormously challenging clinical environments (JAMA 2020).

Is there a coworker unrecognized for his or her strengths and contributions?

Name_________________________________________________________________________

How will you express your gratitude for his or her strengths and contributions during these challenging times?

______________________________________________________________________________

After you do this, revisit this page and write about the person’s reaction and your own.

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

NOTE: Leading from a place of strength does not mean you avoid talking about and dealing with your negative emotions. Neuroscience suggests when you suppress negative feelings, they become stronger (Patel et al., 2019). The human brain goes into survival mode creating a stronger stress response and increasing the level of anxiety.

~Melody Beattie

“Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos into order, confusion into clarity…Gratitude makes sense of the past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow.”
The Healing Benefits of Gratitude

“As human beings, part of our job is to be able to recognize what causes us pain, to work toward healing, and to learn how to live in the world with empathy, forgiveness, and gratitude.” ~Diana Butler Bass

There’s no timeline for how long it can take to heal from the adversities you have experienced from living through and experiencing the pain and suffering brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Practicing gratitude to help process this difficult experience is not to deny the negative events. What is clear from the research is how gratitude offers a less negative impact on emotional health and a greater ability, mentally, to bring some closure. Thinking grateful can help promote the healing of troubled memories that arise from your negative experiences.

Also, gratitude leads to a protective response in the body. Think of expressing gratitude as a technique to block the release of the stress hormone, cortisol. Studies have shown gratitude stimulates the release of oxytocin, a neurochemical that blocks the release of cortisol (Emmons 2007).

Reflecting and expressing gratitude activates the parasympathetic nervous system (calming part of the nervous system.) In doing so, you’re able to achieve many positive health benefits, including a better quality and duration of sleep, lower blood pressure, and a stronger immune system (Wood et al., 2009).

Your gratitude practice may need to start with a very small step of reflection.

Next time you’re washing your hands, practice self-gratitude, and reflect on what your hands have allowed you to do. Name the positive emotions you feel. Capture this reflection below.

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Additionally, use the space below to jot down a few words about someone or something that brought you comfort or peace one day this week.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Someone</th>
<th>Something</th>
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In the next week, find a quiet moment to reflect on—savor—someone or something that brought you comfort or peace. A quiet moment may come from sitting in your car for 2 minutes before starting the engine, set your phone timer, close your eyes, take a deep breath, and reflect. In your reflection, identify the positive emotions you’re feeling.

*Quiet Moment ~ Reflection ~ Positive Emotion*
Receiving Gratitude

“Forget injuries, never forget kindness.” ~Confucius

Gratitude is linked to many benefits across the well-being spectrum – physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. Accessing these benefits includes reflecting, expressing, and receiving gratitude. Being on the receiving end of gratitude can sometimes make you feel uncomfortable. You may be quick to dismiss or brush off someone’s grateful thoughts and words with an obligatory “thanks” or “that’s my job.”

However, it may be helpful to put more attention on your own awareness of other’s gratitude. Research suggests that receiving an expression of gratitude creates a psychological need to reciprocate to someone else, often a third party. The Law of Reciprocity implies, when someone does something nice for you, you do something nice in return. Better known as a “pay it forward” response to an act of kindness or thoughtfulness.

And, because these benefits are crucial to good teamwork, it’s especially worth reflecting on the meaningfulness of a coworker’s expression of gratitude during this time of high stress and anxiety. The next time someone expresses gratitude to you for something you’ve done, fight the urge to deflect the expression.

Additionally, brain scans show that being grateful activates regions of the brain associated with improving psychological well-being, connecting with others, and taking their perspective. With these pro-social benefits, you’re more likely to want to help others, leading to stronger emotional well-being for all (Fox et al., 2015).

Consider the next time someone expresses gratitude to you for something you’ve done on their behalf and note below:

How did it make you feel?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

How did you benefit by receiving this message of gratitude?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

What does this experience say about the person expressing gratitude toward you?

______________________________________________________________________________
Gratitude – A Link to Stronger Mental Health

“There’s a gratitude circuit in your brain, badly in need of a workout. Strengthening that circuit brings the power to elevate your physical and mental health, boost happiness, improve sleep, and help you feel more connected to other people.” ~Alex Korb, Ph.D.

No one is immune to the trauma, grief, and human suffering brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. The gratitude exercises in this workbook are designed to help you continue to build your reserve of resilience: a personal ability that enables you to rebound and recover from the inevitable negative impact of this crisis. Now consider gratitude, with its immense power to restore, rejuvenate, and heal—serving as a pathway to greater emotional and mental well-being and throughout all areas of your life. Gratitude is one of the strongest links to mental health, more than optimism, hope, or compassion. Research demonstrates a strong link between practicing gratitude and improved mental health, including lower levels of depression and anxiety and a reduced risk of substance abuse disorders (Petrocchi et al., 2016).

Writing a letter of gratitude to someone who has made a difference in your life is one of the most highly recommended and meaningful activities to promote healing and well-being. Multiple studies have shown this practice technique to support post-traumatic growth following traumatic experiences, reduce feelings of hopelessness, and increase levels of optimism.

Who comes to mind as someone who has made a difference in your life?

Keep in mind that practicing gratitude is much more than merely feeling thankful. Gratitude reflections and expressions about what’s good in life contribute to both your and other’s overall health and well-being. And, yet, your brain’s built-in negativity bias often causes negative emotions to affect you significantly more than the positive. Negative emotions are more powerful, contagious, and long-lasting—setting up what researchers refer to as a downward spiral of negativity with potentially damaging impact on physical, emotional, and mental well-being.

Go to the Resource Section of this workbook for a Gratitude Letter Template.

To achieve the greatest benefit from this exercise, you need to write the letter, then schedule a visit with this person and read it to them. If they live far away, call and read it to them. If they’re no longer living, read your letter to someone who truly knew this person or someone close to you.
Build and Amplify Your Gratitude Practice

“No one who achieves success does so without acknowledging the help of others. The wise and confident acknowledge this help with gratitude.”
~Alfred North Whitehead

If you knew expressing gratitude to a coworker would improve his or her well-being and your own, would you do it more often?

Social scientists believe gratitude amplifies the good and leads to greater connections with each other, in particular, strengthening relationships and offering greater well-being for all. At the team level or as part of an organization’s culture, gratitude creates a virtuous cycle that fosters better self-care and care for each other.

In the workplace, the more you amplify or practice and sustain gratitude, the greater the reciprocity. Gratitude builds stronger relationships at work and increases prosociality—behaviors intended to benefit others. The science of gratitude is proving essential in improving health and enhancing individual and organizational well-being (Roszak Burton 2020).

How can you express your gratitude to a coworker who recently helped you through a particular challenge due to COVID-19?

What message do you want to compose? (Try to write specifically about the person, write why you’re grateful and how you have benefitted. Acknowledge the intention and possible sacrifice made on your behalf.)

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

How will you express gratitude to this person or persons? (Perhaps by written note, in person, over the phone.)

______________________________________________________________________________

The date you will do this.

______________________________________________________________________________

To broaden gratitude into your workplace, consider the following ideas—share this workbook, bring the practice of gratitude to safety and quality huddles, find a gratitude buddy and share practices, comment on kudos boards. Start all face-to-face and virtual meetings with an intentional message of gratitude, create a shared unit or department gratitude journal.

For more Gratitude Research and Resources go to www.drwcoaching.com
Resources

Gratitude Letter Exercise
_Courtesy of DRW, Inc._

Writing a letter of gratitude to someone who has made a difference in your life is one of the most highly recommended and meaningful activities in practicing gratitude. Identify an individual in your life for whom you are grateful and describe why.

Be as specific as possible -- research confirms greater health and well-being benefits are derived when you acknowledge the true actions of the individual, along with how you have benefited by their actions.

Name___________________________________
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Schedule a gratitude visit with this person in the next week and plan to “read” your letter. (If you can’t visit this person, call them. If they’re no longer living, read your letter to someone who truly knew this person or someone close to you).

How will you deliver this message? _In person or by phone_

______________________________________________________________________________

When will you do so?
______________________________________________________________________________
Helpful Websites

- DRW, Inc.: https://www.drwcoaching.com/gratitude-resources/
- Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley: https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/
- Greater Good in Action: www.ggia.berkeley.edu
- Access Insight MD: https://accessinsightmd.com/
- PeopleTweaker: https://peopletweaker.com/
- HeartMath Institute: www.heartmath.org
- Gratefulness: www.gratefulness.org
- International Positive Psychology Association
- Authentic Happiness: www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/home
- The Positive Psychology Center: https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/
- Positive Psychology Center, Univ of Penn: https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/
- Discovering the Health and Well-Being Benefits of Gratitude: http://www.whartonhealthcare.org/discovering_the_health
- The Neuroscience of Gratitude: http://www.whartonhealthcare.org/the_neuroscience_of_gratitude

Assessments/Toolkits

- For a variety of positive psychology assessments got to Authentic Happiness: www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/home
- Be Less Stressed Toolkit
- VIA Character Strengths: https://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/home
- Gratitude Quiz: https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/quizzes/take_quiz/gratitude
- The Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-6): http://www.psy.miami.edu/faculty/mmccullough/gratitude/GQ-6-scoring-interp.pdf

Books

Linda Roszak Burton
Gratitude Heals ~ A Journal for Inspiration and Guidance

Robert A. Emmons
Thanks: How Practicing Gratitude Can Make You Happier
The Little Book of Gratitude: Create a Life of Happiness and Well-Being by Giving Thanks
Gratitude Works! A 21-Day Program for Creating Emotional Prosperity

Z. Colette Edwards, MD, MBA, aka “The Insight Doctor”
Be Less Stressed

Rick Hanson
Buddha’s Brain—The Practical Neuroscience of Happiness, Love & Wisdom

Jon Kabat-Zinn
Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life

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www.drwcoaching.com
Sonja Lyubomirsky  
*The How of Happiness—A New Approach to Getting the Life You Want*

Janice Kaplan  
*The Gratitude Diaries*

Oliver Sacks  
*Gratitude*

Diana Butler Bass  
*Grateful: The Transformative Power of Giving Thanks*

**Gratitude Videos/Reflections**

Three Reasons to Practice Gratitude During the Coronavirus Crisis (COVID19)

Gratitude Heals Notable Quotes Video: A collection of gratitude quotes

A Gratitude Reflection—Guided Meditation, Linda Roszak Burton:  
[https://www.drwcoaching.com/gratitude-resources/](https://www.drwcoaching.com/gratitude-resources/)

A Meditation on Gratitude—Guided Meditation, Deepak Chopra:  
[https://www.sonima.com/meditation/meditation-on-gratitude/](https://www.sonima.com/meditation/meditation-on-gratitude/)

Gratitude Revealed: [https://movingart.com/gratitude-revealed](https://movingart.com/gratitude-revealed)

**Endnotes**


