

GRATITUDE JUMPSTART!

12 CREATIVE EXERCISES

Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

GRATITUDE ISN'T ALWAYS EASY

Gratitude isn't always easy for those of us living with chronic illness, mental illness, chronic pain, or disability—or for those of us serving as much-needed caregivers. Yet while there *are* continued losses to grieve, there is also much good, beauty, joy, and kindness in the world. Gratitude exercises can help us shift perspective, looking deeper than our pain and wider than our circumstances. Sometimes all we need is a little jumpstart! *A noble heart is a thankful heart that loves to acknowledge whenever it has received any mercy.* (Jeremiah Burroughs) Worthy words to emulate!

GRATITUDE EXERCISES

1. THE PEOPLE YOU KNOW – For each day of the week, thank one person in your life for (brightening your day, making you laugh, listening, their friendship, their presence ...)—***and*** *thank God for them.*
2. 26-DAY ALPHABET CHALLENGE – Each day for 26 days, choose a letter of the alphabet and think of everything you're grateful for that starts with that letter. Consider writing the list in your journal.
3. FROM GRANTED TO GRATITUDE – Focus on being grateful for things you sometimes take for granted, such as:
   - appliances, devices, and utilities.
   - reliable services, such as mail delivery and garbage pick-up.
   - things that keep you comfortable, like a heating pad, a soft pillow, comfy socks, or your favorite chair.
   - the sun shining, birds singing, or children laughing.
   - food in the cupboard and clothes in the closet.
   - a steaming mug of coffee or tea.
   - the Word of God.
4. *DESPITE IT* CHALLENGE – List the things you are *still grateful for*, despite the challenges, difficulties, and pain you experience.
   - What do you still have?
   - What can you still do?
   - Who can you still pray for?
   - Where can you still go?
   - How can you still serve?
   - How can you still give?
   - What can you still eat?
   - What is still good?

5. IT'S IN THE JAR – Keep a gratitude jar. Decorate it and place it prominently. Each day, write one thing you're thankful for on a slip of paper (Post-its work great!), and put it in the jar. When you need encouragement, take out a slip and focus on what it says.
6. TANGIBLE REMINDER – Choose a tangible reminder of gratitude, such as a family photo or handmade gift. It can also be something simple that doesn't hold a particular meaning but that you use every day (such as a light switch or door knob). Each time you see the object, let it be a tangible reminder to be grateful.
7. FOCUS ON THE SENSES – List all the reasons you're thankful for what you can see, hear, taste, touch, and smell.
8. A GRATITUDE BRAINSTORM – Use these prompts to get your thankfulness flowing from prompt to prayer:
   - a simple pleasure
   - a treasured friendship
   - a valuable resource
   - something you're proud of
   - an unexpected compliment
   - a meaningful Bible verse
   - an eagerly anticipated event
   - a meaningful gift
   - a cherished memory
   - a friend who makes you laugh
   - a song that brings you joy
   - a favorite way to serve
   - a special milestone
   - where you feel at peace
9. 16-DAY APPRECIATION CHALLENGE – Each day, for 16 days, thank someone for their kindness, compassion, courtesy, generosity, or selflessness (neighbors, cashiers, pharmacists, delivery drivers ...). Write a short note, text or email, or *thank them in person*.
10. SILVER LININGS – Look for the good on a bad day. Think about the:
    - unexpected assistance from others.
    - irritation that protected you from something worse.
    - humbling experience that revealed how you need to grow.
    - persistence that resulted in startling progress.
    - aggravating delay that kept you safe from the accident on the freeway.
    - test that revealed a diagnosis before you even felt the symptoms.
11. COLOR ME GRATEFUL – Think of all the things you're grateful for that are a particular color. Choose a different color each day, week, or month.
12. BE GRATEFUL TOGETHER – Find a gratitude buddy or form a small gratitude group. Do the gratitude exercises together and encourage one another along the way. Leaning in to gratitude with others jump starts the journey—and remember, Jesus is the ultimate gratitude buddy!