

Gratitude and Cancer

Gratitude, which means feeling appreciative and recognizing the meaningful moments in life, has been shown to improve feelings of well-being and overall health while navigating a cancer diagnosis. This fact sheet discusses:

- **The definition of gratitude**
- **The benefits of utilizing gratitude**
- **Tips and ways to practice gratitude**



What Is Gratitude?

Gratitude is the feeling of appreciation for something you have received or experienced. Practicing gratitude means focusing on positive moments of your life on a regular basis.

Moment-to-moment gratitude - noticing and valuing small, everyday positive sensations and experiences

Recognizing those around you – appreciating the things others do to help you or bring joy to your life

While navigating a cancer diagnosis, gratitude can coexist with a range of emotions. For example, a person may feel grateful for another day while also experiencing sadness or grief for the life they had before.



The Benefits of Gratitude

Practicing gratitude can help how we feel mentally and emotionally. Moments of reflection and happiness can relieve long stretches of stress and worry. Gratitude can help focus on what feels okay, even if only for a moment.

Gratitude can strengthen our relationships with family and friends and help build connections with others.

Gratitude can improve our physical well-being by reducing stress, anxiety and depression. This can lower blood pressure, improve sleep and appetite and strengthen the immune system, whether before, during or after treatment.

Gratitude does not mean ignoring challenging moments or difficult feelings. Instead, it builds resilience and gives yourself a break from stress.



Ways to Practice Gratitude

Simply taking a moment to appreciate the sights and sounds around you, enjoying a cup of coffee or another peaceful activity can give your mind rest. These help incorporate feelings of mindfulness.

A routine of gratitude can also help. Consider setting aside a time each day for reflection. You can develop a habit of thinking quietly to yourself, or you can express gratitude at spontaneous moments throughout the day.

Some ideas for expressing gratitude include:

- **Write about your gratitude.** In a journal or notes put into a jar or other place, you can acknowledge the people and experiences that have impacted your life.
- **Set aside a little time.** Even minutes each day to reflect on what brings you joy in the present moment can ease your mind.
- **Give thanks to others.** Write a letter or take a moment to tell a loved one or caregiver how much you appreciate them.
- **Reminisce.** Looking at photographs, mementos and other objects can remind you of joyful memories and moments.
- **Recognize the little things.** A gentle breeze, lovely music or other sensations can be enjoyed on their own terms to settle you in the moment.

While cancer brings uncertainty and difficulty, gratitude offers a way to find moments of strength and meaning even in hard times. Practicing gratitude can support mental and emotional health, helping you feel more grounded and connected. Small shifts in perspective can have a lasting impact on overall quality of life.

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