



Ascension

Ascension WI EAP

Gratitude in Difficult Times

More than just a silver lining

It's easy to be grateful when things are going our way, when the sky is blue, our loved ones are healthy, and we are at peace. Gratitude in times of turmoil, uncertainty, and even despair can seem impossible at times. Yet, gratitude during those difficult times can be an essential coping tool.

Cliches don't (always) help, and in times of trial our well meaning, good hearted friends or family share advice, quotes, and memes to "look for the silver lining," "don't sweat the small stuff," "appreciate what you've got." It's all true, but it can feel like salt in a wound, and dismissive when we're really feeling like we're in dark times.



Validate yourself because you have the right to feel anger, grief, despair, sadness and all those other distressing feelings. While these feelings are without doubt uncomfortable, they are not

bad. They are normal, human, and healthy reactions to an abnormal situation such as a pandemic, a loved one who is sick, seeing others suffering, job loss, or fear for our own safety. Acknowledge that these feelings are allowed, and allow others to have them too.



Balance... not Avoidance is key. True gratitude can be present in the face of adversity, without dismissing or minimizing the difficult events that are occurring.

Gratitude Is A Choice. Feelings ebb and flow, and we don't always have control over them; they exist among our thoughts, situations, and actions. What we **do** have control over is the action of *being* grateful. Being grateful can lead us to *feel* gratitude.

Gratitude in practice. Here are some exercises to start utilizing gratitude in your daily actions. Most of these start with intentional observation. Focus on details in our daily life, our

relationships with others, and our world around us.

- **Keep a Gratitude Journal** where you can reflect on your day, and pull out some key points such as: who impacted your life in a positive way today? How did they do that? What is something unexpected that occurred that made you smile? What do you have that you are grateful for?
- **Write thank you messages** to family, friends, coworkers, and others who've impacted your life in a positive way. Share those messages often. They can be brief!



- **Harness your spirituality**, and practice saying thank you in the moments you recognize your higher power's presence\
- **Notice one thing.** Nature is all around us and it can be easy to take for granted. On your drive, walking to the mailbox, taking the dog out, or just slowing down to look out a window -- use your senses to pay attention to the natural world around you. Keep paying attention until you have noticed one thing you have not noticed before. Appreciate that moment of discovery.



- **Search for the good** when faced with a very difficult news story, or situation. Listen, and watch for the good. The helper who made a difference, people who donated to a cause, a stranger who assisted -- a positive that bloomed from the negative.

Why does gratitude matter?

Gratitude can lead to hope, connection, enthusiasm, and peace. It can change our entire perspective from hopeless, to hopeful, however; gratitude is more than just a feel good emotion. There are concrete benefits such as improved physical and mental health. For more information behind the science of gratitude go to The Greater Good Science Center website through UC Berkeley.

If you want help on your journey to find gratitude, or just need some help finding a tool that works for you it's ok to ask for help! Friends, family and coworkers are great resources and can help us shift perspective.

EAP can help too. If you'd ever like to talk, just call 1-800-540-3758 or e-mail eap@ascension.org. You can also find more helpful resources on our website www.ascensionwieap.org.