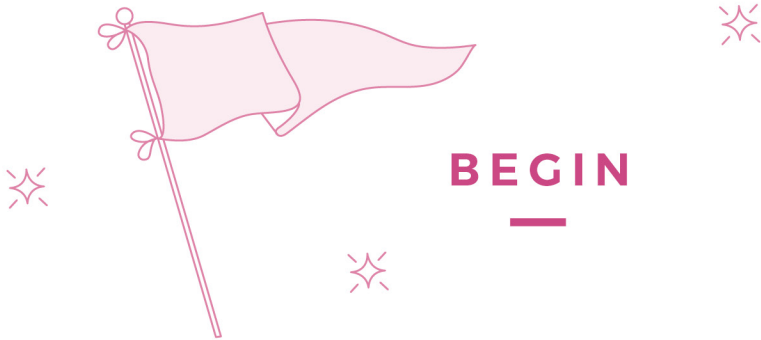

**Let's take a
moment for
gratitude.**

**HOLSTEE
GUIDE**

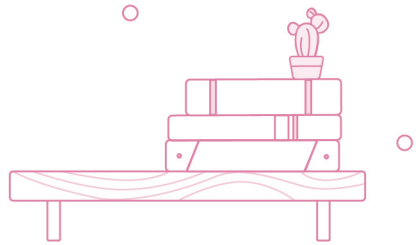


Gratitude is an amazing tool that offers benefits in pretty much every area of life. Psychologists have found that expressing gratitude can help us build relationships, improve physical health, boost self esteem, increase empathy, reduce aggression, build resilience, sleep better, and feel better overall. Dr. Robert Emmons, a researcher and professor of psychology at UC Davis writes, “Gratitude is literally one of the few things that can measurably change peoples’ lives.”

Lucky for us (and we sure are lucky, aren't we 😊), practicing and expressing gratitude is something most of us can do at any moment in our day if we decide to. It takes intention, awareness, and sometimes a little awkwardness. And it can feel downright impossible to practice gratitude when things are truly difficult in our lives. But those are the most important moments to try. Reflecting on what we're grateful for offers perspective on how fortunate we are, even during our darker times.

So, as the saying goes, let's adopt an attitude of gratitude, and get to it! 🙌

LEARN



Researchers found that even after a change in health, relationships, status, wealth, etc., most people typically return to their baseline level of happiness in time. We may have strong emotional reactions (or spikes in happiness/sadness) immediately after. But we usually level out – even when those events bring about lasting change.

This occurrence is known as the hedonic treadmill or hedonic adaptation.

Gretchen Rubin, writer and author of *The Happiness Project* explains:

People are adaptable. We quickly adjust to a new life circumstance – for better or worse – and consider it normal. Although this helps us when our situation worsens, it means that when circumstances improve, we soon become hardened to new comforts or privileges. Scoring air-conditioning, a bigger house, or a fancy title gives us only a brief boost in happiness before we start to take it for granted.

Gratitude neutralizes the effects of the hedonic treadmill. It offers perspective and reminds us that there's good in our lives regardless of things that fluctuate like work, health, and relationships. When we practice gratitude for what we have, that joy and contentment stays with us a little longer.



REFLECT



Journal and Discussion Questions

Let these questions be a starting point for reflection about gratitude. Try to answer each of these either on your own or in conversation with friends and family!

What are three luxuries or conveniences you take for granted?

What made you laugh or smile today?

What is something you're looking forward to in the future?

Who makes your life easier?

What's the kindest thing someone has done for you this week?

I am truly lucky because

_____.



ACTIVITY



Give Thanks



Think of someone in your life who makes your days better, is there for you when you need them, or just makes you smile, and write a little note to them on one of these cards.

Expressing gratitude doesn't always have to come in the form of a long letter or a quick, transactional exchange over the counter of a coffee shop. Sometimes the most meaningful expressions of gratitude are not prompted by any particular event. We can spread a little light and joy to our friends and loved ones just by sharing that we're grateful for them.



This month, we created a few Gratitude Cards to help you do just that. Drop one into your kid's lunch box, leave one on your coworker's keyboard, or hand one off to anyone you want to thank for showing you kindness.




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Gratitude unlocks
the fullness of life.
It turns what we
have into enough.

- MELODY BEATTIE, AUTHOR




COMMIT

Gratitude Challenge: Compile a list of everything you're grateful for this month.

In order to receive all of the incredible benefits of regularly practicing gratitude, we have to, well, regularly practice! That's your challenge this month. Think big, small, concrete, abstract, — the important thing is to reflect. Challenge yourself to write five or more each day, and consider keeping a notebook (or its technological equivalent) to jot things down at any moment.

At the end of the month, you'll have an amazing list of ways in which you're truly fortunate, no matter how many challenging or painful moments also present themselves.

Brother David Steindl-Rast, a Benedictine Monk and the world's foremost teacher of gratitude, makes this important distinction:

There are many things in life we can't be grateful for (sickness, violence, injustice), but in every moment we have the opportunity to be grateful.

We can see the value in what those challenges teach us, in the power to stand up and act, in our ability to reach out and connect. Remember that as you reflect this month!

RECAP

To help you keep these ideas and reflection questions at the front of your mind this month, here's a short recap:

1 Power up. Studies have shown that regularly practicing gratitude helps people feel happier and healthier, sleep better, boost self esteem, and build relationships more easily.

2 Step off the treadmill. The hedonic treadmill refers to our tendency to return to a baseline level of happiness and contentment following a major life change. Gratitude reminds us that there's good in our lives regardless of things that fluctuate like work, relationships, health, etc.

3 Not for everything, but in every moment. Brother David Steindl-Rast teaches us that there are many things for which we can't be grateful. But in every *moment*, we have the opportunity to be grateful, to look for value and meaning.

This kit is inspired by our readings from Gretchen Rubin, Brené Brown, Brother David Steindl-Rast, and Dr. Robert Emmons. For further reading and curated resources on this topic, visit holstee.com/gratitude.