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LIVES



5 PERSPECTIVES

Saying Thanks

Inject more gratitude into your day-to-day life, and discover that a little appreciation goes a long way.

BY SHARLENE BREAKY

PROP STYLING BY STEPHANIE YEH

1

Choose your method.

Saying “thank you” isn’t one-size-fits-all. Some people still love to sit down with a box of fancy stationery, but if you’re not one of them, figure out a method that suits you. Do you take photos? Then snap a picture of the board game you received and text it with some quick words. Think about what the recipient would appreciate; that’s part of being grateful.

GRETCHEN RUBIN IS THE AUTHOR OF *BETTER THAN BEFORE AND THE HAPPINESS PROJECT* AND THE HOST OF THE PODCAST *HAPPIER WITH GRETCHEN RUBIN*.

2

Remove the obligation.

I wrote 365 thank-you notes in a year, and I learned how joyful the act could make me. My favorite notes reached into my past to thank those who had gone out of their way to help me during my travels. It reminded me that these people—the fabulous couple in Berlin, the owner of the barbecue place in New Orleans—could still be in my life, and I could get in touch with them anytime. I like to say that gratitude helps you see the contours of what’s there, instead of the shadows of what isn’t.

GINA HAMADEY IS THE AUTHOR OF *I WANT TO THANK YOU: HOW A YEAR OF GRATITUDE CAN BRING JOY AND MEANING IN A DISCONNECTED WORLD*.

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3

Connect with sincerity.

Research shows we don’t express gratitude often because we think we won’t be articulate enough. But we underestimate how happy a heartfelt note makes people feel. Recipients primarily consider your warmth and your attempt to do something nice. As long as your message is sincere, it’s likely to foster connection in a world that can sometimes feel divided.

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4

**Push yourself to
pay it forward.**

Expressing gratitude motivates us to do other altruistic things, research has found. Recently my son was in the hospital, and after watching how much the staff assisted him, all I could do to offer thanks was say it out loud. Sharing my feelings helped me understand how connected we are, how much we need one another. Seeing the bigger picture often inspires you to help others.

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5

**Treat it like an
imaginative exercise.**

The age-old act of prayer is a way to practice gratitude. My husband and I make a habit of saying grace before dinner. There’s power in slowing down after a long, distracting day and focusing on what we’re doing together. We give thanks for the hands and hearts of those who touched the food on its way to our table. Of course, I don’t know the person who picked the tomato for the sauce, but intentionally thinking about them connects me to another life. This moment shifts the air in the room and propels us forward with new understanding of our interdependence.

MICAH BUCEY IS THE AUTHOR OF *THE BOOK OF TINY PRAYER: DAILY MEDITATIONS FROM THE PLAGUE YEAR*.