

# Four Ways Gratitude Can Keep Your Holidays Happy



As the holidays approach, it's important to prioritize your mental health and well-being. According to a 2021 American Psychiatric Association poll, 41% of adults in the United States reported an increase in stress during the holidays. Common worries included general finances, the ability to afford gifts, and stressful family dynamics. The holidays also tend to magnify feelings of isolation or loneliness if there is a disconnect in current romantic or family relationships compared to traditional expectations of "togetherness." [Click to learn about combating loneliness during the holidays.](#)

A great way to improve your mental health during the holiday season is to incorporate gratitude into your daily life and family traditions, not just around the Thanksgiving dinner table. Practicing gratitude, whether through meditation, journaling, verbal expressions, or acts of service, has been shown to increase satisfaction with life and is associated with fewer symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Consider these four tips to increase gratitude during the holidays.

**1. Eat mindfully.** Enjoy traditional holiday foods with intention and gratitude. Limit distractions and eat more deliberately, taking time to savor your favorite seasonal treats. Click to learn more about mindful eating.

**2. Keep a gratitude journal.** Writing about what you are grateful for can add perspective to a hectic season. Set aside a few times a week (it doesn't have to be daily) to write in detail about the people and things you appreciate. Click to learn tips on keeping an effective gratitude journal.

Ideas to get you started include family, friends, significant others, holiday meals, Christmas lights, meaningful conversations, hot showers, music, books, your body (hearing, smell, touch, taste), the beauties of nature, indoor plumbing, funny online videos, sleep, long weekends, feeling safe, hobbies, animals/pets, religion, baking, artwork, music, sunrises/sunsets, and learning experiences.

**3. Provide acts of service:** Express appreciation to your family, friends, coworkers, pets, etc. Write a letter or choose a thoughtful, meaningful gift for a loved one. Focus on sentiment rather than value.

**4. Meditation:** Find a comfortable place to reflect on the things you are grateful for. If you are new to meditation, find an app for guided meditation. Bonus points for a gratitude-centered meditation guide!

If incorporating these strategies into your busy holiday schedule feels overwhelming, choose just one idea to get you started. It will be well worth the effort if it helps make your holidays more peaceful!