



A new sense of gratitude

In 2021, giving thanks is different.

IN NOVEMBER, Thanksgiving gives us the opportunity to stop and reflect on the people and events that have made a difference in our lives. However, this year feels different when it comes to expressing gratitude and thankfulness. The series of events over the past 18 months—including the COVID-19 pandemic, hurricanes, wildfires, and other natural disasters—have certainly taken a toll on the national psyche. These and other major events have molded how I'm approaching gratitude and gratefulness this holiday season. When it seems like life has slapped us in the face so often in such a short timeframe, a gratitude attitude can help us cope in a healthy way.

Research shows that people who regularly take time to notice things they're grateful for enjoy better sleep, better relationships, and greater resolve toward achieving goals. They also show more compassion and kindness and are happier overall.

Here are a few of the new gratitude practices I've learned. I hope they inspire you, too.

Be grateful for small things. Gratitude doesn't have to be about one big thing. You can be thankful for the little things, like a hot cup of coffee on a cool fall day or the special people you live or work with who make a difference every day. We all want to be happy, but happiness isn't a big thing. It's a million little things.

List negative events that led to positive outcomes. My mother's death from COVID-19 led me to reconnect with friends and nursing

school colleagues I hadn't spoken to in years as they reached out to me with condolences.

Think about people you're grateful for, even if you haven't met them but they still inspired you. I would have valued meeting Florence Nightingale as her words and teachings motivate me frequently. The people who manage and publish the *American Nurse Journal* are so talented and inspire me every day. And I'm thankful for all my ANA colleagues with their never-ending words of wisdom and support.

The best things in life aren't things. As I witness the bravery, dedication, and resiliency of the nurses and staff who deal with the issues of the day, their actions move me to gratitude in so many ways. Also, I realize how much I've missed in-person annual meetings, such as the ANCC National Magnet Conference® and the American Academy of Nursing Health Policy Conference. Connecting with colleagues isn't a "thing," it's a rainbow amidst the rain of professional and personal challenges.

Oprah Winfrey said, "Be thankful for what you have; you'll end up having more. If you concentrate on what you don't have, you will never, ever have enough."

Wishing you a healthy and happy holiday season, filled with gratitude.

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References

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