

LEARN TO LIVE BULLETIN

Your guide in wellness and mental health

Gratitude as Self-Care: Preventing Burnout in the Caregiving Journey

Do you spend your time providing care and support for a loved one? If so, you know how the constant pressure of responsibility and never-ending tasks can lead to emotional stress, fatigue, and potentially loneliness or discouragement. It's important to acknowledge that the burdens of caregiving place us at greater risk of both physical health problems and emotional burnout, and to understand what we can do when experiencing those symptoms.



Some of the markers of burnout can be noticed when we feel physically drained, start gaining weight, or develop high blood pressure. Emotionally we may feel depressed or prone to mood swings, increased irritability, or a heightened sense of anxiety. It's not uncommon for people going through burnout to be less warm and sensitive to others around them. All of these can be indicators that we may be vulnerable to burnout and could benefit from some self-care.

The good news is that there's an often-overlooked tool that can help in this challenging role: gratitude. Gratitude – the simple act of expressing thanks for what one has – is one of the most powerful positive emotions. It has been shown that only 10% of our happiness stems from our life circumstances while about 40% comes from our choices and the way we think about things. This means that if we actively choose to practice gratitude, we can boost our happiness and improve our wellbeing. Gratitude can be a powerful way to cope with exhaustion and build resilience, helping caregivers find positivity and strength even in the most demanding aspects of their work. So, if gratitude can have such a big impact, how do we start practicing it in our daily lives?

Gratitude Practices

There are many ways to express our gratitude. Let's look at a few you could put into practice today.

- **3 Good Things and Their Causes.** Think about or write down three things each day that went well for you, and then try to identify the cause of each one. You could even keep an ongoing "gratitude journal" to write in each day.
- **Reflection.** You can use guided audio or just reflect on your own. It can be as simple as thinking through the past 24 hours and remembering something pleasant you saw, like something beautiful in nature. Or consider something kind that someone did for you, or that you did for someone else. Imagine or write down the details and how it felt in the moment.
- **A Letter of Gratitude.** Write a note expressing your appreciation for someone who did something special for you. Address the person directly and be specific about the event, how it affected you then, why it's still with you. (You don't have to send this note, but doing so will boost your gratitude and build the relationship.)

Get Started Today

The simple practice of gratitude is an incredibly powerful way to increase the happiness you feel and aid in preventing the burnout that many caregivers experience. Consider diving deeper into gratitude in our Resilience program or take a quick mental health assessment and discover which program might be the best fit for you by scanning or visiting learntolive.com/partners and enter access code **MMHG**. Learn to Live is available to you and your family members, ages 13 and older at no cost.