

Blue Cross® VIRTUAL WELL-BEING

Valentine gratitude

Gratitude is appreciation for what you receive, both tangible and intangible. It helps you refocus on what you have rather than what you lack. Gratitude helps you feel more positive emotions, appreciate your good experiences, improve your health, deal with hardships and build strong relationships. Gratitude can also help your heart.

A study published by the American Psychological Association of people who already had damage to their heart found that the more grateful people reported themselves being, the healthier they were. They were less depressed, slept better and had more energy, and blood tests showed they had lower levels of inflammation. Another study by the Harvard Medical School of patients who had heart attacks found those who reported feelings of gratitude took their medication regularly, ate a healthier diet and got more exercise than less grateful patients.



The American Heart Association has a simple, five-question prompt to help you focus on gratitude:

- **H**health: What did your body do for you today?
- **E**eat: What did you feed yourself to nourish your body and mind?
- **A**ctivity: What did you do today that you really enjoyed?
- **R**elationship: Who do you look forward to seeing?
- **T**ime: What are you doing right now?

A Princeton University study found that showing gratitude can cause a ripple effect. When you show gratitude, your family and friends are likely to be inspired to incorporate it into their own life. Some ways to incorporate gratitude into your Valentine's Day this year — or any day this year — are:

- Writing down and giving your family or friends a list of the seemingly small things you're thankful for that they do, such as cooking dinner for the family when you're running late from work or always remembering your coffee order
- Calling your parents, sibling, grandparents or others to tell them you love them
- Doing something unexpected for someone, such as making a special breakfast for your spouse and children if you're not the one in the family who cooks
- Spending time being thankful for the things around you
- Buying yourself a gratitude journal and start writing down two or three things you're grateful for each day

Sources: [apa.org](https://www.apa.org)*, [ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)*, [greatergood.berkeley.edu](https://www.greatergood.berkeley.edu)*, [health.harvard.edu](https://www.health.harvard.edu)*, [pnas.org](https://www.pnas.org)*

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