



Being Thankful during a Pandemic

The pandemic is and has taken its toll on everyone from those who have become ill, even dying, to school at home, unemployment, financial challenges, lockdown and missing family. The holiday season is now in full swing and everyone is determining what that means for traditional holiday celebrations. Lockdowns and restrictions vary from county to county and state to state.

How can we feel thankful in the middle of a pandemic with no clear end in sight?

We hear people talk about being resilient, strong and brave. Those are admirable goals and even achievable if we address one other important aspect of this pandemic, grief. This pandemic has globally created great loss and trauma for individuals, families, communities, businesses, Governments and countries. As human beings we grieve those losses, individually and collectively. To move through these losses we need to acknowledge and grieve them. We need to recognize and talk about our anger and sadness which allows us to draw on our strengths and resilience in accepting the restriction, find ways to be grateful and be creative in our celebrations. We offer these suggestions to express our grief, define methods of coping with the challenges and build resilience by identifying our gratitude.

- 1) **Share your feelings** with yourself and others through journals and discussions. It is okay, even essential, to be honest about the sad, angry and frustrating feelings. Everyone is having them!
- 2) **Provide regular daily breaks** from schoolwork, work at home, tasks and obligations. We need more “down” time individually and with others to talk and relax.
- 3) **Research different stress reduction techniques** and incorporate them regularly in your daily schedule individually and as a family/team. By scheduling de-stressing activities you will offset build up of stress that becomes overwhelming.
- 4) **Slow down expectations of tasks and goals.** We cannot accomplish the same level of productivity in a pandemic. All activities take longer to achieve.
- 5) **Think outside the box.** The “Normal” way of doing things will not always work with restrictions and conducting tasks virtually. Look at the “desired outcome” for any/every activity and task. Find another way to achieve the same outcome with a different set of activities. This is true for work and school projects.
- 6) **Meet basic needs** of regular healthy meals, daily exercise and adequate sleep. Our bodies need to be sustained with we are coping with a long term challenge such as a pandemic
- 7) **Connect with family and friends** daily though every method possible to support each other, share experiences and continue to build memories.
- 8) **Find humor** in the daily frustrations and restrictions. Don’t be overly serious or frightened.

We cannot control the pandemic BUT we can control our actions during it. Through our actions and attitude we will identify our gratitude and find new creative ways to celebrate the holidays.

“I'm not going to focus on the bad days. I choose to live in gratitude”. **Marcela Valladolid**