

# COVID-19 Mental Health & Coping Resources

F O R E V E R Y O N E

## B U I L D I N G R E S I L I E N C E S E R I E S

*It's difficult to believe that these trying times might offer us avenues for personal growth. Cultivating hope in time of fear can be hard, but there are ways we can shift our thinking to broaden our awareness beyond what's difficult. We can build resilience by training our minds to appreciate ourselves and others. Part 5 of the Building Resilience Series is on gratitude.*

## Gratitude

When everything around us seems heavy, it's easy to believe nothing good exists—or even if it did, it wouldn't matter. We tend to retain what's going wrong in our minds, because of a built-in negativity bias. The habit of only paying attention to what's painful will inevitably leave us exhausted and overwhelmed. To overcome this default way of thinking, and to minimize an ongoing fight, flight, fear response, we look to the practice of proactive gratitude to help us keep a balanced perspective.

Practicing gratitude releases the beneficial neurochemicals of dopamine and serotonin, which inhibit Cortisol and block emotions such as anger, fear, and envy. Researchers study communities around the country who have experienced tragedy. Among the families who lost everything in Hurricane Katrina, it was those who practiced appreciation that were able to endure the suffering more effectively.

So how do we put gratitude into practice? Pause right now to think or talk to someone about a "gratitude antidotes." What made you appreciate this and why? Helping your elderly neighbor get groceries, spending one more hour at night with your family, exchanging glances with a grateful patient, or getting a good night's sleep - these small life moments help you build in breaks from anxiousness. In the long run, you will train yourself to start automatically looking for the good.



### 1. Create your daily micro-habit.

A commitment to a proactive "practice" helps you find purpose and builds your mental reserves for when you need it most.

- Pick a time during the day – perhaps every time you wash your hands, use those 20 seconds to think of three things you are grateful for. Or before you go to sleep, replay the day and recall something that felt meaningful.

**2. Practice self-gratitude.** Reflect on how you are positively handling this crisis. List personal strengths that are helping you and those close to you cope.

**3. Openly show appreciation.** Gratitude has been shown to create more pro-social behaviors. So whether you're working remotely or going into work, there's good reason to start each meeting or huddle by thanking others for efforts to get the job done, especially under these difficult and trying times.

\*To get started practicing gratitude, listen to the mindfulness recording that accompanies this tip sheet.