



This has been a long stressful year for first responders and the holidays are approaching which tends to lead to increased stress. Good stress and bad stress both cause physiological responses in our brains and bodies. Learning ***the art of appreciation*** can be the key to combating the side effects of stress.

When you break bread with loved ones or coworkers use this as an opportunity to give verbal gifts of kindness and appreciation for one another. This instills the practice of ***gratitude***. A little bit of gratitude goes a long way when it comes to feeling better physically, mentally, and spiritually. Gratitude combats stress responses regardless of how intense things can get.

Gratitude is more than just saying thanks.

It's a combination of three powerful components:

1. **The appreciation of what you have** or receive.
2. The **affirmation of goodness** in the world.
3. **The acknowledgment of others** and the role they play in that goodness.

Research has shown us that when you focus on gratitude regularly you can experience:

- Less discomfort
- Reduced stress
- More restful sleep
- A stronger defense system
- Better relationships.

Ways to practice gratitude:

1. Say 'Thank you' verbally or in writing

Take some time to *really* thank the people that lift you up with a written note, text or a quick chat.

For the biggest impact, make sure to call out what they did for you, acknowledge the effort or sacrifice they made, and how their actions helped you!

2. Keep a gratitude journal

Each day, write down **3-5 things, large or small, that make you feel grateful**. Sometimes it's the littlest things — a new pair of shoes, a good book, a good sleep, a worthwhile call — that can make you feel good.

3. Meditate

Set an intention of gratitude during your next meditation session. Focus on the things you're grateful for, both big and small.

If you can't think of anything, try to pinpoint how different your life would have been if a specific positive moments had not happened to you.

4. Acknowledge your resilience

Take a step back and analyze how you have bounced back from some bad calls or life events and appreciate your resilience.

Choosing to get back up after a hard time in life has knocked you down is one of the biggest acts of strength we can practice. Make sure you give yourself the recognition you deserve. This not only helps you recognize your own resilient behavior, but empowers you to lean into that strength the next time you need it.

5. Volunteer

Donating your time to those less fortunate than you is a great physical expression of gratitude.

These acts can make you more grateful for the little things you may take for granted!

If you have the ability to contribute monetarily or with your time either act is giving and will be appreciated by you and others.

Gratitude takes intention, discipline and dedication!

It will be tough some days or shifts to see the good around you.

But if there's one thing you can *always* find to be grateful for, Yourself. Be kind to yourself and you will be kind to others.

If you need assistance managing your stress use your resources.

www.firestrong.org or www.pscrisissolutions.com