

HAKKAROT HATOV: JUDAISM, GRATITUDE, AND YOU

Together, we'll be exploring the ways that gratitude can play a role in our daily lives, connect us to ourselves and each other.

This is your invitation to turn off your notifications, get comfortable in your space, and be present with an attitude of gratitude. Thanks for joining us here as we unpack the ways gratitude can play an important role in maintaining mental health.

The Blue Dove Foundation's mission is to educate, equip, and ignite our Jewish community with tools to understand, support, and overcome the challenges presented by mental illness and substance abuse. As a community with a focus on tikkun olam, we work to eradicate the shame and stigma surrounding these issues.

Today, tikkun olam starts with hakkarot hatov, recognizing the good.



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WHAT IS GRATITUDE?

GRATITUDE IN JUDAISM

GRATITUDE IN PRACTICE

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We believe Jewish prayers, rituals, and resources can help to strengthen our mental well-being, resilience, and recovery in the same way middot, or Jewish values, can promote them. Faith is an important part of healing for many, and Jewish thinkers and leaders historically have brought the two together.

HAKARAT HATOV

In Judaism, the middah (Jewish value) of [hakarot hatov](#) is used to emphasize the importance of recognizing the amazing things God has blessed us with in our lives. Not only is hakarat hatov about gratitude; it is also about our attitude toward the world around us. Translated from Hebrew, the term means “recognizing the good.” Traditional Judaism implores us to focus on the message of hakarat hatov by finding one hundred things to be grateful for every day. If you look even deeper into the prayers that are said daily, they are infused with millions of thankfulness blessings for God, for waking up, for our ability to breathe, and for anything else you can think of. The core of Jewish teaching is being thankful for everything around us.

The essence of hakarat hatov isn't just to express thankfulness to those around you and the objects you possess in your life; it also is to truly feel the gratitude deep in your heart and soul. In order to do so, you must practice gratitude every day. The feeling of gratefulness stems from the intention of finding the good in everything you do, which can be measured easily through writing and keeping a log of the things you are thankful for. Day by day, hakarat hatov can change your mindset into more positive thinking, which is a breath of fresh air for those who struggle with mental health.



The Good

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GRATITUDE & JOY



Sally Mundell is an author, a philanthropist, a speaker, an innovator, an e-commerce and direct marketing strategist, and the founder of ThePackagedGood.org. Sally also runs [You Do Jew](#), which celebrates all things Jewish and helps people cultivate their “Jew-rney” to a life of meaning, learning, growing, and giving. Learn more about Sally at [SallyMundell.com](#), and follow [@YouDoJew](#) on Facebook and Instagram.

MY SECRET SWITCH

Our minds and bodies are capable of miraculous things, one of which I call the “switch.” Over the years, I’ve discovered its power in the seemingly instant ability to shut off my ego and turn on my being. We all can almost instantaneously make the leap from tense and stressed to relaxed, peaceful, and even elated, as evidenced by postcoital bliss.



And while history’s best poets have tried to put words to such a seismic shift in feeling, it has proved to be elusive. I think that’s because it’s an energy shift that transforms not only our way of thinking but also our way of being.

I’m no poet, but I’m going to try and share my transformative experience with what I call the “gratitude switch.” With a quick flip, it can power your presence of mind, open your eyes to miracles, fuel your sense of vitality, and bring on your being in the truest sense. Basically, it’s a happy switch.

I wasn’t seeking this switch; rather, it was sort of forced upon me. And for that, I’m grateful.

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I lost my husband, Grover, suddenly to lung disease six years ago and knew if I didn't grab a hold of hope and gratitude, I'd be a goner. I'm not sure why, but one Sunday morning I woke up with my senses tuned into the good going on around me. Even in the midst of tremendous loss and sadness, I smelled the sweet scent of lilies; noticed the kindness of family, friends, and neighbors; and felt excited and appreciative about a promotion at work. The cumulative effect of each small moment of gratitude catapulted me from a numb state of grief to one full of life, happiness, and hope.



At the time, and even to this day, I'm not sure what flipped the switch, but I found it to be self-fulfilling. The more I looked for the positive, the more I saw it. The more I sought reasons to be grateful, the more reasons I found. And while I wish I could say I've been able to stay in this happy place continuously, that's not the case. Without a concerted effort to practice gratitude, the feeling proved to be fleeting, and my mind had a tendency to flip back to the darkness.

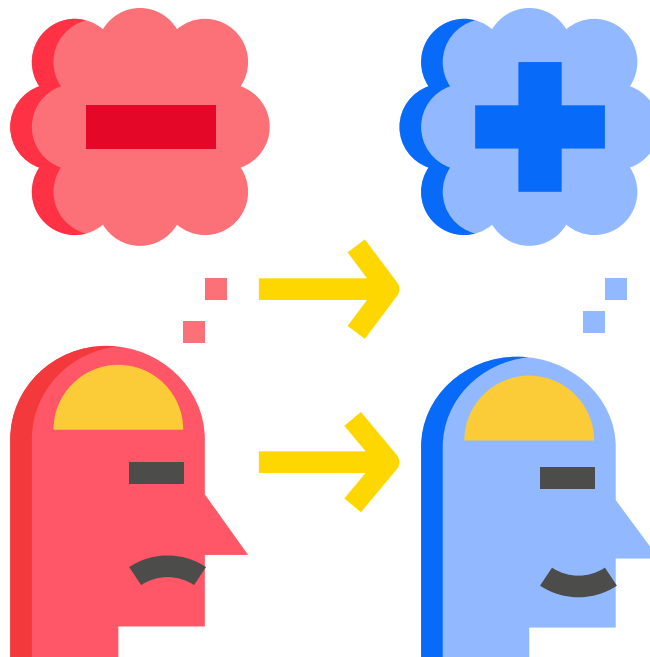
I recently finished building a new house, and over the year it took to finish it, I took note of every single issue. From the dysfunctional plans to the missed paint spots to the cracked bathroom tiles, I sent myself into a spiral of exhaustion trying to identify and fix every flaw. One night after my daughters and I moved in, I sat down, took a deep breath, and wondered why, with this amazing new home, I still felt so down.



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Just a few days after the start of my love affair with my house, I found myself in a familiar pattern with my girls. Frustrated with the backtalk and misbehavior, I was fixating on their faults. I made a mental list of all of the things they forgot to do or didn't do right and started down the self-deprecating swirl of questioning my parenting ability. But luckily before the flush, I caught myself and said "stop." I turned the switch and focused on their compassionate acts of kindness. The love they show each other and our dog, Puff, even if it's sandwiched between some dramatic sisterly fights. I admired their curiosity and creativity, and an abundance of unconditional love for my smart, sweet, amazing girls came flooding through my heart, where it was once dammed by negativity.

Having experienced the power to change my life by changing my mindset—and as a curious being—I'm now in pursuit of new switches. And in the meantime, I'm making sure to keep the gratitude light on.



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JUDAISM'S CONNECTION TO GRATITUDE

Prayers are found in all aspects of Jewish life, from birth to death. Take a second to look deeper into their meaning. They scream gratitude and joy. On Shabbat and other holidays, for example, we offer our appreciation by blessing God for giving us the Sabbath, wine, bread, and so forth.

Rabbi Geoffrey A. Mitelman, founding director, Sinai and Synapses, shared his thoughts in the article [To Be a Jew Is To Give Thanks—By Definition](#), which ran in the Huffington Post on November 26, 2013. You can read the full version [here](#).

The Torah tells us of how Leah gave birth to several sons, and when the fourth one was born, she said, “אֹדֶה אֶת־יְהוָה” - “This time, I will give thanks to God,”

(Genesis 29:35). The root letters of “odeh” -

“I will give thanks,” form the basis of the name

that Leah chose for her son: **Yehudah, from which,**

we get the name “Judah.” And from “Judah” we get the word “Judaism.”



So in the end, our greatest Jewish responsibility is to give thanks, because when we do, we recognize the holy potential of our world and bring more of it into people's lives. And with that potential, when we look—when we really look—for one hundred blessings every day, we can then create even more of those blessings, for ourselves and for our world.

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GETTING STARTED WITH GRATITUDE

Gratitude is incredibly personal. To practice feeling and expressing gratitude daily, you'll want to try different things and pay close attention to how they make you feel afterward. The end goal is the feeling of joy. This list is not a fully encompassing list of ways to show gratitude, but rather a starting point.

Send a Card to Someone

Sending a hand-written card makes a huge impact. Individuals often assume people in our lives know we're grateful for them. But many of them don't. If you're grateful for someone, let them know by sending a hand-written card. Individuals will acknowledge and appreciate the time you took to think about them, write a note, and mail it.



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CREATE A GRATITUDE LIST

Aim for one hundred things. This can be a very daunting task. The trick is to start with broad categories, and then engage your senses to identify the specific items you're grateful for relating to the larger category.

Examples:

CATEGORY - MY PET DOG

- I love that my dog is always waiting at the door for me when I get home.
- The soft touch of his head on my lap.
- His excitement when he puts his head out the window.



CATEGORY - SAYING HELLO TO A STRANGER

- I see the smile and reaction on a stranger's face when I say "hello."
- It makes me smile when the stranger returns the "hello."
- I hope I make people feel special when I acknowledge them.



CATEGORY - A GOOD CUP OF COFFEE IN THE MORNING

- Enjoy the smell of the coffee as it cools down.
- I like to listen to the sounds of life outside my home as I wait for the coffee to cool down.
- I am so thankful for this moment of peace and quiet, as I look outside my window and see the great world around me.



