Gratitude, the feeling of thankfulness or appreciation, can be easy when experiencing a simcha (happy occasion). But it is no less important during our toughest moments. When we lose a loved one, many of us say Kaddish. In this moment of grief, we say, “Blessed and praised, glorified, exalted and extolled, honored, adored and lauded be the Name of the Holy One, blessed be He.”

This may seem counterintuitive, and yet Jewish culture teaches that in moments of pain, fear and instability, a gratitude practice can help us cope. As we incorporate it into our own self-care, gratitude can play a large role in healing, both physically and mentally. For those living with depression or other mental illnesses, it can be even more important — especially right now, when many of us remain isolated from others.

In the Torah, Leah gives birth to her son and says “I will give thanks to Adonai.” Odeh et Adonai. In Hebrew, the root letters of odeh (ודיה) — “I will give thanks” — form the basis of the name Leah chooses for her son: Yehudah (יהוד). In English, we translate Yehudah to “Judah,” the root of “Judaism.”

With her choice, Leah teaches us our greatest Jewish responsibility is to seek moments of thankfulness. When we do, we recognize the holy potential of our world and our ability to bring more of it into people’s lives. (Adapted from the article To Be a Jew is to Give Thanks-By Definition, originally published in the Huffington Post.)

So how can we begin to infuse gratitude into our daily lives?
Look around. What are three things I have that I really need right now?

Who has reached out to me this week, and who has gifted me an act of kindness?

What is one small, everyday thing or activity that makes me feel good?

What is one thing I can do for someone in the next few days?

What is one strength I have to help me get through this difficult time?

What is one thing I have learned about myself this week?

What is one place in my home that makes me feel good?

Who made me smile last? How did he or she do it?
ACTIVITIES TO START PRACTICING GRATITUDE:

Gratitude Jar or Box

- Use markers, stickers, paint and other materials around the house to decorate a jar/cardboard box.
- Every time you are grateful, write it down on a slip of paper and put it in the jar.
- For a fun twist, make one for someone else! Every time he or she does something that makes you smile or that you are grateful for, write it down, and later share the jar/box with him or her.

Gratitude Walk

- Fresh air and natural light can make a big difference to our mental health.
- Take a walk and try to clear your mind. Instead of thinking about something specific, imagine the thoughts floating by.
- Focus on the sight, smells and sounds.
- Please keep six feet away from everyone you see!

Gratitude "Gardening" — Create your own gratitude tree or flower!

- Draw or print the trunk and branches of a tree and decorate it.
- Print and cut out leaves.
- When something happens that makes you grateful, makes you smile or reminds you of this tree, write it on a leaf and tape it to the tree.
- You can also do this for a flower and petals.

Gratitude E-card

- Think about a person who has done something recently to help you or something that made you smile. One of the ways we can infuse gratitude into the world is to remind people their actions have had a positive impact on us.
- Send a virtual card through the Blue Dove Foundation at thebluedovefoundation.org/gratitudecard.

Gratitude Reflection/Meditation Activity  Still Mind, 2014

- Find a comfortable position. You can sit, lay down or use any relaxed posture. Take a few deep, calming breaths to relax and center yourself. Allow your awareness move to your immediate environment—all the things you can smell, taste, touch, see or hear.
- Say to yourself: “For this, I am grateful.”
- Next, bring to mind those people in your life to whom you are close—your friends, family, partner or someone else. Say to yourself, “For this, I am grateful.”
- Next, turn your attention to yourself: You are a unique individual, blessed with imagination, the ability to communicate, to learn from the past and plan for the future, to overcome any pain you may be experiencing. Say to yourself: “For this, I am grateful.”
- Finally, rest in the realization that life is a precious gift. That you have been born into a period of immense prosperity, that you have the gift of health, culture and access to spiritual teachings. Say to yourself: “For this, I am grateful.”
Full versions available for download at thebluedovefoundation.org/socialdistancinggratitude.