

GRATITUDE - הַכֶּרַת הַטוֹב - HAKARAT HATOV FOR (VIRTUAL) THANKSGIVING

Gratitude, the middah, or Jewish value, of hakarat hatov, is the feeling of thankfulness or appreciation. It's easy to feel gratitude when experiencing a simcha (happy occasion). But it's no less important during our most challenging moments.

Thanksgiving this year is sure to be one of those times. Many of us traditionally gather to celebrate Thanksgiving with our loved ones. This year, many of us will be celebrating apart. But despite the physical distance, we can still connect to our loved ones and find moments of thanks, gratitude and joy.

In the Jewish tradition, we say:

“Who is rich? Those who rejoice in what they have?” (Pirkei Avot 4:1).

This Thanksgiving, we can focus on what we do have instead of what we don't and enrich ourselves and our mental well-being.

Gratitude can play a large role in healing, both physically and mentally. It is a form of self-care that helps us build resilience and strengthen our mental health. For those living with depression or other mental illnesses, gratitude can be even more important — especially right now, when many of us remain isolated from others.



GRATITUDE QUESTIONS TO ASK AROUND THE (VIRTUAL) THANKSGIVING TABLE

What am I lucky to have at my (virtual) Thanksgiving table?

Who will be joining me, in person or virtually, for Thanksgiving?

What have I done to help another person, family or community this year?

What is one thing I can do to bring joy to somebody's Thanksgiving holiday this year?

Which strength can I rely on to help me be my best self?

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

What is going right in my life right now?

What am I hopeful for?

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 they do something that makes you smile or that you are grateful for, write it down. Share the jar/box later with them.

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 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.

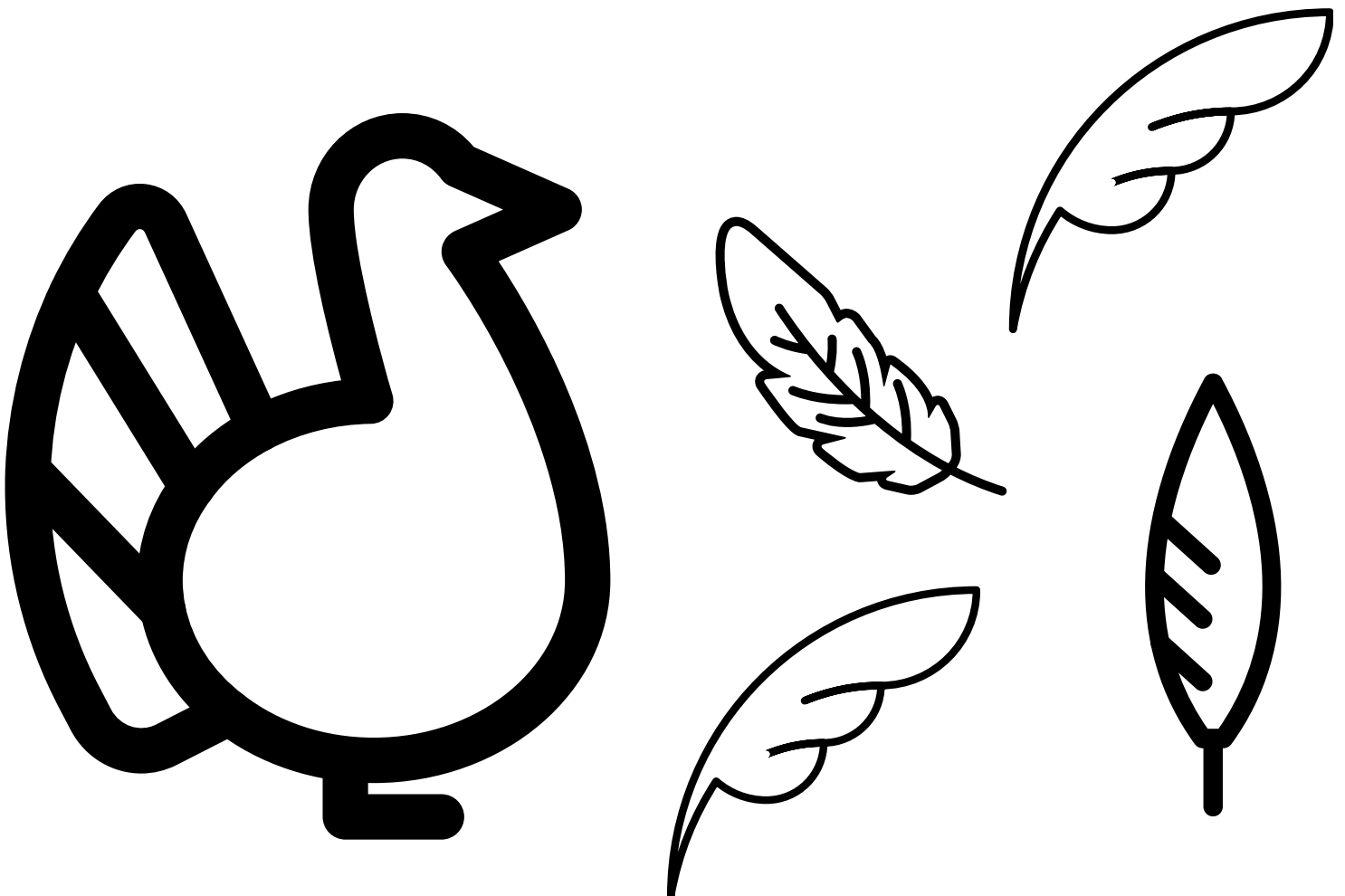
Gratitude Reflection/Meditation Activity Still Mind, 2014

- Find a comfortable position. You can sit, lie down or use any relaxed posture. Take a few deep, calming breaths to relax and center yourself. Allow your awareness to 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 with 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 and that you have the gift of health, culture and access to spiritual teachings. Say to yourself: “For this, I am grateful.”

THANKSGIVING ACTIVITY TO START PRACTICING GRATITUDE:

Create a Gratitude Turkey

- Draw or print the turkey body on a separate piece of paper and decorate it.
- Draw or print out and cut the feathers.
- Sit for a moment and think about what you are grateful for. You can use the questions above to help guide you.
- On each feather think of one thing you're grateful for and write it down. Challenge yourself to get as many feathers on your turkey as you can!
- In the body of the turkey, write one kavanah, or intention, you have for the upcoming year.



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