

Mindfulness 101: Mindfulness, Gratitude, and Kindness Over the Holidays

Scott L. Rogers

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The holiday season has arrived. Family gatherings, respites from work, spiritual and religious traditions, and an ethos of care offer opportunities to take stock and reflect on our lives, careers, and relationships. Over the next several weeks, many of us will spend time with family and friends, offer thanks for our good fortune, and look with kindness and generosity to those in our midst who are struggling.

An advertisement for iManage Closing Folders. The background is dark blue. In the top left is the iManage logo (a blue circle with a white 'm') and the text 'iManage Closing Folders'. To the right, the text reads 'M&A deals are **complex.** Signature page management shouldn't be.' Below this text are three white document thumbnails with blue borders. The middle thumbnail has a green checkmark in the top right corner. In the bottom right corner, there is an orange button with the text 'WATCH A DEMO' in white capital letters.

In this column, we take a brief look at two popular practices—gratitude and loving-kindness—after which I'll share a short and easy-to-remember practice that brings them together. You may find this practice to be a source of added delight when a relationship is strong and helpful when a relationship is strained.

The Benefits of Gratitude

A growing body of research finds that practicing gratitude is good for our mental health and well-being. People who practice gratitude tend to be

happier, sleep better, feel less anxious, and have greater heart health, to name a few reported benefits.

Popular Approaches to Practicing Gratitude

Practicing gratitude can take many forms, including journaling, meditating, and giving. A popular approach to journaling involves noting up to five things for which you feel grateful. While you can do this in your head, making a physical record is recommended. The items you identify can be small or big, and the benefits of the practice may be enriched as you become more specific and personal and go into greater depth regarding the reasons you feel grateful.

A related approach involves setting aside a period of time to meditate and bring to mind and heart people and things for which you are grateful. This can involve visualizing a person, hearing their voice, or remembering time spent together and reflecting on why you feel gratitude. Another approach, which journaling and meditating can inspire, is reaching out to a person, either through a surprise e-mail, writing a letter, or calling them (even setting up a time to meet) and sharing with them your appreciation. All these approaches involve remembering a person or situation and, through a period of intentional reflection, experiencing the affirming emotions that come with doing so. So, too, generosity and giving to others can be an immensely uplifting gesture that bolsters our well-being and helps the world become a better place. You can learn more about gratitude practices by [clicking here](#).

Loving-Kindness

A mindfulness practice known as loving-kindness (also known as connection) involves bringing to mind a series of people, one after the other—beginning with oneself, then moving to a person from and for whom you feel much love, then to a neutral person, then a difficult person, and then to all beings—and wishing them kindness in the form of happiness, health, safety, and ease. For example, you might bring to mind a parent or child and wish, “May you be happy.” You can [learn more about this practice here](#) and [listen to a practice guided by mindfulness teacher Sharon Salzberg](#).

Bringing Together Gratitude and Kindness

This holiday season, you can bring together relaxation, gratitude, and kindness with the below practice. You might choose to do so when enjoying a pleasant encounter with someone or when in the midst of a difficult interaction. By practicing now and a few more times later today with a person you bring to mind, you will find the instructions come to you more easily when you are with someone.

Practice Instructions

- 1 With attention directed to the person (in fact or in mind),
- 2 take a few slower, deeper breaths, and
- 3 reflect on something they did for which you feel a sense of gratitude. This may be something done recently or many years in the past. It may be something they did for you, or something they did that was helpful to someone else, or to a useful cause.
- 4 Wish for them, “May you be happy,” or some other warm wish that feels apt, such as, “May you be safe,” “May you be healthy,” “May you be free from anxiety,” or “May you be free from pain.”

In addition to practicing when in physical proximity to someone, you might also do so before or after spending time with them or when they come to mind. Practicing can buoy positive emotions and soften feelings of disconnect, which can, in turn, enrich the quality of our interactions, along with our (and possibly their) well-being. While this short, informal practice may be helpful for easing a sense of distance and agitation toward someone with whom things are challenging, it is primarily intended to be directed toward someone for whom there is a general abundance of good feelings and warm regard and respect.

I wish you all well this holiday season, with gratitude for all you do for our profession and society. May you be happy, safe, and healthy and live with ease.

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