KEARNEY COUNTY
HEALTH SERVICES
Senior Life Solutions

GRATITUDE AND MENTAL HEALTH: SMALL WAYS TO NOTICE THE POSITIVES





November often brings conversations about thankfulness, connection, and reflection. For older adults, gratitude can be a helpful practice for supporting emotional well-being, especially during seasons that may also bring grief, loneliness, health concerns, caregiving stress, or changes in routine.

Gratitude is the practice of noticing and appreciating something supportive, comforting, or worthwhile. It may be a kind phone call, a warm meal, a favorite song, a helpful neighbor, a good memory, or a moment of peace during a difficult day.

Research by the National Library of Medicine has connected gratitude practices with improved well-being, and a systematic review found that gratitude interventions may have beneficial effects on mental health and quality of life. Harvard Health also notes that gratitude can help people focus on what they have and strengthen positive connections with others.

Gratitude can help someone notice small moments that may otherwise be missed during periods of stress or sadness.



It can also support relationships. Thanking a caregiver, calling a friend, writing a note to a family member, or sharing a memory with someone you trust can create opportunities for connection. These moments may help reduce feelings of isolation and remind older adults that they are seen, valued, and supported.

Check out the next page for more.

HOW TO PRACTICE GRATITUDE

Like most things, gratitude can be practiced and improved upon, although it doesn't require a large commitment. Just a few minutes each day can be an effective way to start. Some ways to practice include:

Writing down three things you appreciated today

Saying thank you to someone who helped you

Thinking about one person who has made a difference in your life

Sharing a positive memory with a friend or family member

Noticing one comforting part of your daily routine

Keeping a small gratitude journal near your bed or favorite chair

Sending a card, text, or phone call to someone you appreciate



GRATITUDE IN HARD TIMES

Gratitude can also be practiced during difficult times. A person may feel thankful for support while also feeling sadness, grief, worry, or frustration. These feelings can exist together. Gratitude does not erase hardship, and it does not require someone to pretend everything is fine. It offers one way to notice care, comfort, and connection while facing life honestly.

HOW FAMILIES AND CAREGIVERS CAN HELP

Family members and caregivers can help by asking gentle questions, such as "What is something that brought you comfort today?" or "Who is someone you have been thinking about lately?" These conversations can encourage reflection and help older adults feel connected to others.

When sadness, anxiety, grief, isolation, or low motivation persists and begins to interfere with daily life, additional support may help. Mental health care can provide a safe place to talk, learn coping skills, and build supportive routines.

WE CAN HELP.

Our hospital-based outpatient program is designed to meet the unique needs of older adults experiencing depression and/or anxiety related to life changes that are often associated with aging or a chronic diagnosis. Anyone can make a referral to our program, including self-referrals, provider referrals, or community consultations.

Call us today at (308) 832-3400, Option #4