

Strategy #17: Gratitude Lists and Journaling

When we are stressed, our minds look for potential threats or danger as a way to keep us safe. This means your mind will put more effort into finding things that are negative and cause negative emotions, thereby increasing your stress.

How to practice this strategy

One way to break up the focus on threats and negative thoughts is to shift into a state of gratitude. There are two ways to shift into a state of gratitude:

1. Gratitude lists

Make a list of five things you are grateful for. You can do this when you wake up, before you go to bed, or both. These do not have to be really important things such as family and friends, although they can be. Try to include some smaller things from your day-to-day life that you are grateful for such as comfy beds, a good meal, a friend who sends you a text message, or someone who lets you in in traffic.

The purpose is to bring more awareness to the good things in life and to create a sense of gratitude.

2. Gratitude journaling

Begin free writing (writing down whatever thoughts come to your mind) about the things you are grateful for and why. You can do this daily even when you are not stressed.

Begin this practice as soon as you notice your stress warning signs.