

# How to Use Gratitude During Crisis

"In the face of demoralization, **gratitude** has the power to energize. In the face of brokenness, **gratitude** has the power to heal. In the face of despair, to bring hope. In other words, **gratitude** can help us cope with hard times."

Robert A. Emmons, *The Gratitude Project*

Gratitude involves a choice to repurpose crisis and pain into personal growth.\*

The psychological term for this is "post-traumatic growth," the lessons and meaning we gain in the wake of trauma. Post-traumatic growth often leads to:

- Stronger self-perception as we realize we can cope with hardship;
- Stronger relationships with more time spent in helping others;
- Shifts in life priorities and values; and
- Greater acceptance of mortality coupled with greater appreciation of each day of life.

\*Smith, J. A., Newman, K. M., Marsh, J., & Keltner, D. (Eds.). (2020). *The Gratitude Project: How the Science of Thankfulness Can Rewire Our Brains for Resilience, Optimism, and the Greater Good*. New Harbinger Publications.

Emmons, R. (2016). *The Little Book of Gratitude*. Octopus Publishing Group.

## Thought Questions to Grow Gratitude During Crisis

***Can I find ways to be thankful for what happened to me now, even though I was not at the time it happened?***

How did this crisis change my life in a positive way?

Can this problem help me grow in patience or perseverance?

***What do I see now that I didn't see before?***

Can I see others' struggles more clearly and empathize with them?

How did my life priorities change?

***How did I meet this challenge in ways that surprised/encouraged me?***

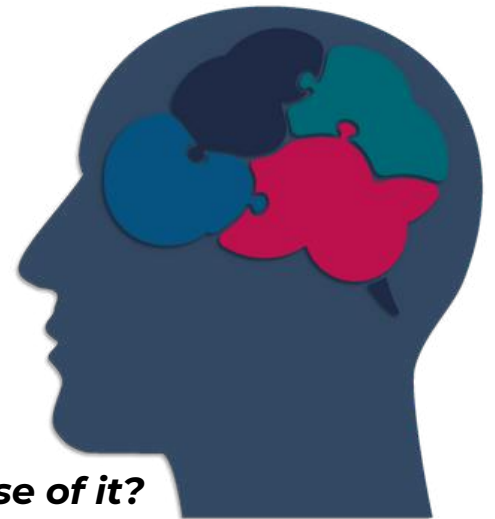
What inner strengths did this crisis uncover?

***How am I now more the person I want to be because of it?***

Did the current adversity stretch and strengthen me for future adversity? Do I feel more confident that I can handle the next problem life throws at me?

***Will I be able to help someone more because of what I've been through?***

Often, nothing means more to someone who is suffering than the comfort and support of someone else who has been through the same thing.



"Remember, your goal here is not to relive the experience but rather to get a new perspective on it. Simply rehearsing an upsetting event makes us feel worse about it. That is why catharsis has not really been effective....No amount of writing about the event will help unless you are able to take a fresh, redemptive perspective on it. This is an advantage that grateful people have - and it is a skill that anyone can learn."

Robert A. Emmons, *The Gratitude Project*

