



## BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



### Sharing a Tradition of Gratitude is Brain Healthy

*The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is working to develop brain healthy communities, creating a culture that promotes brain health protective factors and decreases risk factors, thereby improving brain health, optimizing brain performance, and preventing and fighting brain illness across the lifespan for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. **Today's Boost talks about how sharing an "attitude of gratitude" can improve your life and your brain health.***

The holiday season brings expectations for celebrating good times with family and friends, but for many people the holidays bring sadness and loneliness. One way to offset these negative feelings is by taking part in a Thanksgiving tradition — practice being grateful.

Gratitude is feeling appreciation, gratefulness, or graciousness. It encourages brain health and fights brain illness by amplifying the good in our lives, including the good in our relationships, in our coping abilities, in our thinking skills, and our overall health and well-being. To be grateful is to be aware of and thankful for the good things that happen. It involves taking time to recognize and give thanks, acknowledging receipt of something of value — a smile, a hug, a gift, a favor, a blessing — to feel thankful for it and then to be inclined to give kindness in return.

While Thanksgiving is the perfect time to show our gratitude, it is also a time to recognize what is happening in the world and share our appreciation for the work of the many who make our lives possible. In a 2017 article for [ABC News](#), Dr. Robert Emmons, a professor of psychology at the University of California-Davis, recommended bringing a deeper awareness of those forces which make that very world possible part of our tradition of gratitude and make it part of our daily lives.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

*Gratitude is a way for you to appreciate the positives in your life, helping you refocus on what you have instead of what you lack. Here are some ways to cultivate gratitude during the holidays and beyond from [Harvard Health](#) and the BHI.*

- **Say ‘thank you.’** Expressing your appreciation for the impact someone has had on you can make you happier and nurture your relationship with that person. Try setting a goal of telling someone thank you at least once a week with a note or a phone call. If you don’t have time to send a thank you note, thank them mentally. Think about what that person has done to make your life better and send them a mental high-five. And don’t forget to thank yourself!
- **Keep a gratitude journal.** Take a few minutes every day to write down the gifts you received that day. Share your gratitude by sharing those gifts with your loved ones.
- **Count your blessings.** Try picking three to five things every week for which you are grateful and write them in your gratitude journal. Be specific and think about how you felt when something good happened to you.
- **Meditate.** Mindful meditation requires focusing on the now without judgment. Instead of focusing on a word or phrase during your meditation, try focusing on things for which you are grateful — the warmth of the sun, the sound of your child laughing, a hug from your partner, or the taste of a good cup of coffee. If you are religious, you can include a prayer to cultivate your gratitude.
- **BE BRAIN HEALTHY and adopt a lifestyle** that includes thoughts, behaviors, emotions, responses, and language that promote brain health protective factors:
  - Stress resilience
  - Nutrition
  - Physical activity
  - Sleep
  - Social connection
  - Emotional wellbeing
  - Meaning and Purpose
  - Cognitive stimulation and creativity
  - Engaging with nature
  - General health
  - Positive impacts

### **About the Brain Health Initiative ([www.brainhealthinitiative.org](http://www.brainhealthinitiative.org))**

The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is a cutting-edge approach to protecting brain health, promoting brain performance, and preventing and fighting brain illness across the lifespan. The BHI is creating brain healthy communities, cultures that foster brain health protective factors and address risk factors, thereby improving brain health and optimizing brain performance outcomes for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. Join the ***Be Brain Healthy*** movement, ***because brain health matters, and lifestyle makes a difference.*** To view all Brain Health Boosts [click here](#).