



# THE INTENTIONAL Thanksgiving

3 Simple Exercises to Practice Gratitude

A Guide by GiANT WORLDWIDE



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What is the opposite of intentional? If you guessed “unintentional,” you’re right. But you know what describes “unintentional” even better than simply being the negative form of the word?

Accidental.

The truth is, the opposite of intentional is accidental – it’s doing things without pre-determined purpose, reflection, or focus. Unfortunately, gratitude is one of those vital elements of life we tend to relegate to accidental or fickle feelings generated in the moment rather than a state of being we intentionally cultivate.

The very existence of the Thanksgiving holiday is meant to provide a counter to the accidental life. It is crafted to provide a lens, mechanism, or even an excuse (should we need one) to help us intentionally reflect on the blessings we “accidentally” allow to go unnoticed throughout the year. I love the old adage, “You can’t give what you don’t possess.” It gives both perspective and challenge as we cannot give something for which we have no room within us. Therefore, in order for you to give genuine gratitude to those you care about, you must first “possess” it (cultivate it) yourself. What does that mean? How do you “possess” thanks?

It means you cannot give thanks unless you are grateful, and you cannot encourage others or impart gratitude to them if you are not thankful for what you have already received. As with many things, the change starts within you. If you want to experience a great Thanksgiving then I would encourage you to pause and foster personal gratitude.

In my experience, when gratefulness is turned up to its highest level in a person’s life, then areas of selfishness, greed, and unnecessary worry and frustration get pushed out of that life.

It makes sense, doesn’t it? When a person spends more time being grateful, thankful for the people in their life, or appreciative for their job, then their perspective will produce a different spirit that is both more attractive and helpful to those around them. This cumulative thankfulness spreads like wildfire in a person’s mind and heart and inevitably spills over into the lives of those around them. In the end, most of the things we are grateful for have longevity, whereas most of our frustrations are rooted in the short term, and are often the result of our own making.

If you want to boil it down to a single point, gratefulness destroys negativity. Though such a statement may sound benign, negativity accounts for the greatest threat to our ability to become the best version of ourselves. It inhibits the best elements within us while multiplying and fueling the most detrimental impulses that drive our actions. So take a stand for the little things – the things that, upon further reflection, aren’t so little after all: The colleague who always seems to know what to say during a rough week at work. The parent who quietly, but consistently made sure you were always safe and loved. The friend who just always seems to make you smile or bring out your best simply by being near you.

Everywhere you look you can find accidental parenting, accidental leadership, and accidental living. This Thanksgiving, don’t let gratitude become a casualty of an accidental approach to life. Harness the power of giving thanks and cultivating gratitude to build the life of joy, contentment, and empowerment we all long to live. Check out our next page for a few exercises that will help you nurture your spirit of gratitude!

## **Exercises for a More Meaningful Thanksgiving**

### **Exercise 1 – Thanksgiving List**

A Thanksgiving list is not about the material gifts you plan to give, but rather the words of gratitude you want to gift to some of the special people in your life. So make a list of those people then write down a few words to help you express your gratitude for their help, encouragement, mentorship, friendship, or whatever it is that you appreciate about them. Whether face-to-face, in a letter or email, or in some other creative way, such as a video or video call, tell them how you feel. None of us can ever have too much encouragement in our lives, so take a moment to fill the emotional tanks of someone who's done the same for you. Give it all you've got. Go deep. Don't stand in the shallow end of your general thoughts; go for the right words that truly mean what you feel.

Here are a few examples...

- ▶ Spouse – Thank you for allowing me to live my dreams and supporting me in \_\_\_\_\_ with the utmost vigor and joy. Let him/her know how much I value his/her partnership.
- ▶ Kids - Let them know how proud I am of them and what I see in them. Maybe use Thanksgiving Day to pull them away, one-by-one, to share the specific goodness I find in them.
- ▶ Jason and Family - Discuss the past two years and let him know how grateful I am for he and his family's friendship/partnership, and how much I appreciate the way their family feels like ours.
- ▶ Mike & Megan - Use FaceTime; Tell them thank you for their help moving, and let them know the good things I see ahead for them.

### **Exercise 2 – Celebration Dinner**

For those of you who don't like getting sentimental or emotional, this is the perfect holiday for you. It's literally called "Thanksgiving," which makes it the least awkward time of the year to tell someone how much he or she means to you. Our challenge to you is this: take a few minutes at the dinner table on Thursday to say something appreciative or encouraging to each person and invite everyone else to do the same.

When you gather around the Thanksgiving table or after you have eaten and before the clean up begins, simply start by telling everyone something like this: "Today let's go a bit deeper in our Thanksgiving. We are going to go around the room and simply say what we appreciate about each person with a simple word, sentence, or thought. Let's go popcorn style and speak up to tell each person what we are grateful for about him or her. You'll be shocked at what specific, genuine, public celebration of others can do for them as well as your relationship with them.

### **Exercise 3 – Increasing (or Acknowledging) Gratefulness**

- ▶ Take 5 deep breaths. Be thankful for your health and think about all the harm you have been kept from, even during times of trial and sickness.
- ▶ When you eat your next meal be grateful that you had money to pay for it.
- ▶ Think about the 5-10 things that happen for you everyday – the privilege to raise your kids or feel the love of a spouse, to know your family and be able to count on them, or to work with a colleague who makes you better - don't take for granted the people, opportunities, or little blessings that impact you every day.

Make a list of the 10 things you are most grateful for this year. Get specific. Don't just say "family," but list out a few details. If you're thankful for a great trip with friends, write out a few defining moments, recount what you loved best about the trip, or make a list of the things you learned about yourself, others, or the place in which you traveled.



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