Thanksgiving is the official season of gratitude: that old-fashioned, warm and fuzzy out-loud appreciation of our fellow humans. Most of us count our blessings for a day, then dust off the list a year from now.

But a ream of research makes the case that gratitude shouldn’t just be a seasonal affair. It’s stellar for your health; practicing gratitude is linked to better immunity and blood pressure and less loneliness, which comes with its own host of health detriments. It improves sleep and self-esteem. People who are grateful are more likely to exercise more and visit the doctor less. And even today, they’re less likely to compare themselves to others.

Gratitude is the very stuff that makes social relationships possible and pleasurable. But like anything else that’s good for you, gratitude takes work and doesn’t always come naturally. Here are four science-backed ways to get more grateful.

1. **Buy something.**
Make sure it’s something you can do, not own. You probably already knew that experiences—things like vacations, concert tickets or nice meals out—make you happier than material purchases like gadgets or jewelry. But a series of new studies published in the journal *Emotion* finds that they make you more grateful, too. When people thought about past experiences they’d paid for, they used more thankful language than when they reflected on possessions.

   The best part is that everyone benefits. “When people reflect on their experiential pursuits, they end up feeling grateful, but not necessarily grateful to a particular entity,” says study co-author Amit Kumar. People feel fortunate, and because it’s a “diffuse, untargeted type of gratitude, they’re motivated to give back to people in general.”

2. **Write a letter.**
One scientifically reliable way to nudge people toward gratitude is to have them write a grateful letter to someone else. Researchers recently had a group of therapy patients do this, while another group wrote deeply and expressively on their stressful experiences. A month after the experiment ended, people who wrote grateful letters reported significantly better mental health than those who wrote expressively. The effect stuck around when researchers measured again after three months.

3. **Choose the right words.**
It’s good to be grateful—but don’t forget who deserves the credit. In a recent study, researchers watched while couples expressed gratitude to each other, taking careful note of the language they used. The compliments were either other-praising—phrases that keep positive attention on the person, like “you go out of your way” and “I feel like you’re really good at that”—or self-beneficial, meaning the speaker framed the compliment in terms of how she benefited, such as “it let me relax” and “it makes me happy.”

4. **Don’t feel weird about it.**
Even though gratitude is an evolutionary tool to help people feel more connected, it can feel awkward to express. And won’t the targets of your gratitude feel kind of weird when you tell them how exactly much they mean to you? That’s a common but unfounded fear, Kumar is finding in forthcoming research. “People tend to overestimate the awkwardness and underestimate how good the recipient of gratitude will feel,” he says. But the response to gratitude is “almost universally positive, even though we don’t always anticipate that it’s going to be beforehand.”

Educational Corner: Understanding the Basics of Alzheimer’s

Alzheimer’s is a disease that robs people of their memory. At first, people have a hard time remembering recent events, though they might easily recall things that happened years ago.

As time goes on, other symptoms can appear, including:

- Trouble focusing
- A hard time doing ordinary activities
- Feeling confused or frustrated, especially at night
- Dramatic mood swings -- outbursts of anger, anxiety, and depression
- Feeling disoriented and getting lost easily

The disease makes brain tissue break down over time. It usually happens to people over age 65.

A person can live with Alzheimer’s disease for just a few years or for a few decades. More often, however, people live with it for about 9 years. About 1 in 8 people age 65 and over has the disease. Women are more likely to have it than men.

What Causes Alzheimer’s Disease?

People who get Alzheimer’s disease are usually older, but the disease isn’t a normal part of aging. Scientists aren’t sure why some people get it and others don’t. But they do know that the symptoms it causes seem to come from two main types of nerve damage:

- Nerve cells get tangles, called neurofilbrillary tangles.
- Protein deposits called beta-amyloid plaques build up in the brain.

Researchers aren’t sure what causes this damage or how it happens, but it could be a protein in blood called ApoE (for apolipoprotein E), which the body uses to move cholesterol in the blood.

Whether or not ApoE partly causes Alzheimer’s, genes almost certainly play a role in the disease. Someone with a parent who had the disease is more likely to have it, too.

Scientists are still studying many of these theories, but it’s clear that the biggest risks linked to Alzheimer’s disease are being older and having Alzheimer’s in your family.

Source: Neil Lava, MD of WebMD

Healthy Cooking: Spiced Turkey with Avocado-Grapefruit Relish

Ingredients:

**Avocado-Grapefruit Relish**
- 1 large seedless grapefruit
- 1/2 avocado—peeled, pitted, and diced
- 1 small shallot, minced
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 teaspoon red-wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon honey

**Spiced Turkey**
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 1/2 teaspoon five-spice powder*
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 2 turkey cutlets (8 oz)
- 1 tablespoon canola oil

*often a blend of cinnamon, allspice, fennel seed, star anise, and Szechuan peppercorns found in spice sections

Directions:

- To prepare relish: Remove the peel and white pith from grapefruit with a sharp knife and discard. Cut the grapefruit segments from the surrounding membrane, letting them drop into a small bowl. Squeeze out remaining juice into the bowl and discard membrane. Add avocado, shallot, cilantro, vinegar and honey. Toss well to combine.
- To prepare turkey: Combine chili powder, five-spice powder and salt on a plate. Dredge turkey in the spice mixture.
- Heat oil in a medium skillet over medium-high heat. Add the turkey and cook until no longer pink in the middle, about 2 to 3 minutes per side. Serve the turkey with the avocado-grapefruit relish.
Have a Healthy Thanksgiving

During Thanksgiving, it’s easy to go overboard with the calories and consumption. Temptations of gooey pecan pie and dense sweet potatoes topped with crackly marshmallows make it seem impossible to be disciplined.

But eating healthfully on Thanksgiving doesn’t mean you have to forgo all your favorite foods, said Jennifer K. Nelson, a registered dietitian and director of clinical dietetics at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn. “If you’ve got your eating under control for the majority of the time, go ahead and have a piece of pie — just don’t lose control entirely,” Nelson told MyHealthNewsDaily.

Stick to healthy portions.

Just one plate of Thanksgiving food is all you get, Nelson said. Fill up half your plate with vegetables, fruit and a whole wheat roll, a quarter of it with mashed potatoes or sweet potatoes, and a quarter of it with turkey or ham. And, the more colorful your plate, the better — so get lots of leafy greens, carrots, bell peppers and beets in your veggie spread, Nelson said.

It’s a holiday, so indulge a bit. But if you’re going to eat dessert, make sure you allot for the calories elsewhere — don’t go back for that second helping of marshmallow sweet potatoes, and instead opt for the cranberry salad if you’re going for the pie, pick fruit or pumpkin pies because they tend to have fewer calories than chocolate or pecan pies.

Eat before you indulge.

Don’t starve yourself during the early part of Thanksgiving Day, with the idea that you’re just “saving room” for all the food, or that this will make it okay for you to overeat later. It’s a recipe for overeating, Sandquist said. “You definitely want to have your normal meals because otherwise, whenever we get over-hungry, we overeat,” she said.

Substitute healthy ingredients for unhealthy ones. There are plenty of ways to make Thanksgiving fare healthier. For mashed potatoes, Nelson suggested mixing in chicken broth, herbs or roasted garlic to perk up the flavor instead of adding in butter. And for dips, use Greek yogurt instead of sour cream — the consistency is similar, but yogurt has less fat and more protein, she said. If you’re baking homemade pie, opt for whole wheat pie crusts and substitute low-fat or skim milk for evaporated milk, she said.

Drink lots of water and take a walk after eating.

Many times when people think they are hungry, they are actually just thirsty, Sandquist said. By drinking lots of water throughout the day, you’ll lower the risk of overeating. It’s also a good idea to take a walk after eating to get your metabolism going instead of laying on the couch, she said.

Source: Amanda Chan, LiveScience

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**Have a Happy and Healthy Thanksgiving!**

**Enjoy the festivities...**

| Avg. Calories Consumed | 4,500 |
| Avg. Calories at Dinner | 3,000 |
| Avg. Calories Snacking | 1,500 |

**Suggested Daily Calorie Intake**

- Male: 2,600
- Female: 2,000

Suggested calorie intake for moderately active male or female, age 26-45.
Karen’s Korner, Karen Hensley, UR Dietician: Tips for a Healthy Thanksgiving

We all know that Thanksgiving Day can be a hard day to eat healthy. Here are a few tips to help you make this day healthier.

1. Start your day off with exercise. Take a walk in morning and consider taking a neighborhood stroll after dinner.

2. Eat breakfast. Start your day off with a healthy breakfast such as oatmeal or a veggie omelet. Eating breakfast helps you from being ravenous going into Thanksgiving dinner. If your dinner is later in the day, don’t forget to eat lunch.

3. Pitch in. Offer to bring something to the dinner. This way you can make a dish that you know is healthy.

4. Position yourself away from the food. Don’t stand right in front of the appetizers or candy dish. Socialize away from the food.

5. Divide your plate well. Decide what food you’d like to eat and then fill your plate with ½ vegetables, ¼ protein, and ¼ starch.

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