

The Complete Chronic Illness Gratitude Toolkit

This Toolkit Includes:

1. "Small Good Things" Tracking Sheet
2. Grief + Gratitude Journal Template
3. "AND" Practice Worksheet
4. Body Gratitude Letter Templates
5. Sensory Gratitude Checklist
6. Quick Reference Guide
7. Gratitude Myths Debunked

Small Good Things Tracking Sheet

Small Good Things 28-Day Tracking Sheet

Notice tiny, specific moments each day

How to Use

Each day, write down 1-3 small, specific things that you notice. They don't have to be important. Focus on sensory details and concrete moments.

Examples

"My coffee was the perfect temperature."

"The heating pad felt good."

"I managed to shower."

"My cat purred on my lap."

"The sunset was beautiful through my window."

*****Remember: Some days you might not find anything. That's ok. Your pain is valid. This is data, not grades. You're learning about yourself.*****

Small Good Things 28-Day Tracking Sheet

Notice tiny, specific moments each day

Track Your Small Good Things

DAY	SMALL GOOD THINGS (1-3 PER DAY)
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	

Small Good Things 28-Day Tracking Sheet

Notice tiny, specific moments each day

Track Your Small Good Things

DAY	SMALL GOOD THINGS (1-3 PER DAY)
8	
9	
10	
11	
12	
13	
14	

Small Good Things 28-Day Tracking Sheet

Notice tiny, specific moments each day

Track Your Small Good Things

DAY	SMALL GOOD THINGS (1-3 PER DAY)
15	
16	
17	
18	
19	
20	
21	

Small Good Things 28-Day Tracking Sheet

Notice tiny, specific moments each day

Track Your Small Good Things

DAY	SMALL GOOD THINGS (1-3 PER DAY)
22	
23	
24	
25	
26	
27	
28	

Grief + Gratitude Journal Template

Grief + Gratitude Journal Template

Both truths can coexist

How to Use

The grief column is just as important as the gratitude column. You don't graduate from grief to gratitude - they coexist. Some days the grief column will be longer. That's ok. Some days you might only have grief. That's valid, too.

This isn't about "balancing out" grief with gratitude. It's about acknowledging that both exist.

Examples:

GRIEF	GRATITUDE
I miss being able to run 5Ks.	I'm grateful I can still walk my dog slowly.
I'm angry I need so many medications.	I'm grateful these medications exist.
I grieve my old social life and spontaneity.	I'm grateful for friends who still show up.

*****Remember: The grief column is just as important as the gratitude column.*****

Grief + Gratitude Journal Template

Both truths can coexist

Daily Journal Entry

Date:

GRIEF	GRATITUDE

Grief + Gratitude Journal Template

Both truths can coexist

Weekly Journal Entry

Week of:

GRIEF	GRATITUDE

“AND” Practice Worksheet

The AND Practice

Both/And Thinking Worksheet

What is Both/And Thinking?

“BUT” creates a hierarchy - it suggests one truth cancels out the other. “AND” allows both truths to coexist with equal validity. This is especially important in chronic illness, where we need to hold both grief and gratitude simultaneously.

The Problem with “BUT”

“I’m in pain, BUT I should be grateful I can still walk.”

The word “BUT” dismisses the pain and introduces shame. It suggests you shouldn’t feel pain because you have something to be grateful for.

The Power of “AND”

“I’m in pain AND I’m grateful I can still walk.”

Both things are true. Neither cancels the other. You can be in pain and grateful. You can grieve and appreciate. You can struggle and find moments of light.

Examples of Both/And Thinking

“I’m exhausted from this flare AND I’m grateful for my comfortable bed.”

“This disease ruined my plans AND I’m building something new.”

“I’m frustrated with my limitations AND I’m proud of my resilience.”

“I hate having RA AND I love the community I’ve found.”

“I’m angry at my body for failing me AND I’m grateful for the parts that still work.”

“I’m grieving my old life AND I’m discovering new strengths.”

The AND Practice

Both/And Thinking Worksheet

Your Turn: Practice AND Statements

Hard truth:

AND (acknowledgment or gratitude)

Hard truth:

AND (acknowledgment or gratitude)

Body Gratitude Letter Templates

Body Gratitude Letter Templates

Thank your body parts that still work

Why Body Gratitude?

Chronic illness makes us hyper-focused on what's broken. This practice redirects attention to what's still working - without dismissing what isn't. You're allowed to be angry at malfunctioning parts while appreciating working parts.

Important: This is NOT toxic positivity. You don't have to love your malfunctioning body. You're simply acknowledging that some parts are still cooperating.

Example Letters

Dear Left Knee,

I know Right Knee is a disaster. I know you're probably scared you're next. But thank you for still bending, for still holding my weight, for still letting me walk to the bathroom in the middle of the night. You're holding down the fort, and I thank you.

Love, Me

Dear Hands,

I know mornings are rough. I know your knuckles hurt and your joints are stiff. But thank you for the afternoons when you cooperate. Thank you for still letting me type, hold my coffee mug, pet my dog, and hug the people I love. You're doing your best in terrible circumstances.

Love, Me

Body Gratitude Letter Templates

Thank your body parts that still work

Your Turn: Write Your Letters

Dear _____,

Love, Me

Dear _____,

Love, Me

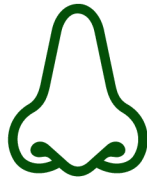
Sensory Gratitude Checklist

Sensory Gratitude Checklist

For Pain, Flares, and Hard Days

When you're in pain, gratitude feels impossible. This checklist helps you notice that pain **isn't** the only sensation present. Other experiences coexist with pain.

Move through each sense slowly. Check off anything you notice or appreciate - even tiny things. You don't have to find something for every sense.



*****Remember: You're not denying pain. You're noticing that pain isn't the only thing present. That's all this is - just noticing.*****

Sensory Gratitude Checklist

For Pain, Flares, and Hard Days



SIGHT

What's one thing you can see that's pleasant?

Sunlight through the window
Your pet's face
A favorite photo or object
The color of your blanket
Something beautiful
Your own:



SOUND

What's one sound that's not unpleasant right now?

Birds outside
Rain of the roof
A favorite song or calming music
Your pet's breathing or purring
Silence (if noise is overwhelming)
Your own:



SMELL

What's one smell you appreciate right now?

Coffee or tea
Fresh laundry
A candle
Food cooking
Fresh air from an open window
Your own:



TASTE

What's one taste you can appreciate?

Your favorite tea or coffee
A piece of chocolate
Cold water when you're thirsty
A favorite snack
Medicine going down
Your own:



TOUCH

What's one physical sensation that feels ok or good?

Heating pad warmth
Soft blanket texture
Your pet's fur
Gentle pressure from a pillow
Cool water on your face
Your own:

Quick Reference Guide

Gratitude Practice Quick Reference

8 Techniques Adapted for Chronic Illness

SMALL GOOD THINGS

Notice 1-3 tiny, specific moments daily. Focus on sensory details. Example: "My coffee was perfect." "The heating pad felt good." "I managed to shower."

BODY GRATITUDE LETTERS

Write short letters to body parts that still work. "Dear Eyes, Thank you for letting me see..." You can be angry at broken body parts AND grateful for working parts.

THE "AND" PRACTICE (BOTH/AND THINKING)

Replace "BUT" with "AND". Example: "I'm in pain AND I'm grateful I can walk." (both are true). Hold two truths simultaneously without one canceling the other.

GRATITUDE FOR SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Acknowledge people, tools, meds, or systems that help you survive. Who checked on you? What adaptive tool helps? What medication works (even imperfectly)?

GRIEF AND GRATITUDE JOURNAL

Two-column journal: one for grief, one for gratitude. Both columns are equally important. Some days the grief column is longer - that's valid.

SENSORY GRATITUDE

Move through your 5 senses during pain. What can you see, hear, smell, taste, or touch that's not unpleasant? Pain isn't the only sensation present.

GRATITUDE FOR YOUR RESILIENCE

Acknowledge what you've survived and how hard you're working. "I made it through a flare." "I advocated for myself." "I showed up for myself." That's incredible.

FUTURE GRATITUDE VISUALIZATION

Imagine a future moment you'll appreciate. "This flare will end. I'll be grateful for that relief." creates hope alongside suffering. Reminds you that this is temporary.

Gratitude Myths DEBUNKED

Gratitude Myths DEBUNKED

What gratitude practice is NOT

**Share this with people who don't understand.
Refer to it when someone tries to toxic-positivity you.**

MYTH	REALITY
"You should be grateful, it could be worse."	Gratitude isn't comparative suffering. Your pain is valid, regardless of whether someone else has it "worse."
"Gratitude means you're always happy."	You can practice gratitude and still be angry, sad, or frustrated. They coexist.
"If you're truly grateful, you wouldn't complain."	Venting, expressing pain, and advocacy are all compatible with gratitude.
"Gratitude practice should be easy."	It's called a PRACTICE for a reason. Some days it feels impossible. That's normal.
"You should be grateful for your illness."	Absolutely not. You never have to be grateful for your disease. You can hate it and still practice gratitude for other things.
"Gratitude will cure your illness."	Gratitude is a mental health tool. It may help depression, sleep, and coping, but it won't cure physical illness.
"You owe people gratitude."	You don't owe anyone gratitude. Not your doctors, family, friends, or strangers. This is optional.
"Negative thoughts cause illness."	NO, chronic illness is NOT caused by negative thinking. This is victim blaming disguised as wellness.

Gratitude Myths DEBUNKED

What gratitude practice is NOT

What gratitude practice actually is:

- Acknowledging BOTH suffering AND moments of goodness.
- A research-backed tool that may support mental health.
- Something that works alongside grief, not instead of it.
- Optional and adaptable to YOUR needs.
- You can be in pain AND practice gratitude.
- You can grieve AND appreciate
- You can struggle AND find moments of light.