

8 Ways to Cultivate a “Luckiest” Outlook When Faced With Challenges Like Cancer

Use these exercises to track thoughts of gratitude and love and to create a library of good feelings.

March 11, 2024 By [Trent Straube](#)

“The more I remembered to feel gratitude, the better I felt,” writes Kristin Smith Westbrook in [The Luckiest Unlucky Person I Know](#), a memoir of metastatic breast cancer and practical advice (read our [interview with her](#)). “If regret and what-ifs started pouring in, I reminded myself to return to the present moment. I knew I could change my thoughts. I decided to choose thoughts that made me feel good.” But it takes effort to rewire your brain’s tendency to dwell on fears and anxiety, and Westbrook developed exercises, including the one reprinted here, to help you see the upside of things. “Choose one to three of the exercises from this list of ‘luckiest’ practices each day for 21 days,” she instructs, adding that “you’re free to modify and find whatever works for you.”

Thankful

List three new things you feel gratitude and appreciation for.

Example: “Today, I’m grateful for: hot water, technology and my husband.”

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Love

Name something that makes you feel good.

Example: "I love cats—they are so sweet and friendly! I just really love cats. I think they are beautiful, amazing creatures with unique personalities."

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Sweet Moment

Capture something nice that happened today. It could be an image, a phrase or a story.

Example: "I saw a woman walk up to the mailbox, hold a letter up to her lips and kiss it before putting it into the slot."

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Small Change

Set the intention to make small changes in your life by adding or subtracting one thing.

Example: “This week I’m going to get more sleep and watch less TV.”

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Move

Choose a fun physical activity that you can do anytime today. Do it for at least 10 minutes.

Example: Run, skate, bike, ride horseback, dance, jump on a trampoline or swing on the swings at the park. Whatever moves your body and gets your blood flowing.

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Inspire

Write an inspirational quote or find a quote by someone who inspires you. Create an image of it. Type it, draw it, record yourself saying it. Save it in three different places, such as around your home, office or car.

Example: "I am enough."—Marissa Peer

Give

Do one thing that makes someone else feel good. Send a text or an email telling a friend something you love about them.

Example: “Dear friend, you are kind, supportive and loving, and I cherish our friendship.”

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Turn Around

Turn a limiting and negative belief into a positive one simply by reframing it. Train your mind to search for positive thoughts.

Example: “I’m not good enough to start my own business. I’ll never be successful,” turns around to: “I am a capable person, and I have excellent problem-solving skills.”

Doriot Kim

Excerpt from [The Luckiest Unlucky Person I Know, A Practical Memoir](#) by Kristin Smith Westbrook.
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Editor's note: It is with great sadness that we report that Kristin Smith Westbrook died on February 29, 2024. She was a brave, kind and caring person, who inspired many others through her work.
[Click here](#) to read her obituary.