

Savoring and Gratitude: Make the good stuff even better

From NPR: A taste of the skills taught in Northwestern's resilience course from researcher Judy Moskowitz.

Years ago, psychology researcher Fred Bryant wanted to find out if there is a way to enhance people's ability to derive joy from positive experiences. "It was assumed if a good thing happened, you would feel happy. But we all know people who don't know how to enjoy themselves," he adds. Bryant coined the term **savoring** — and created a field of research around it. Savoring has been used to help treat anxiety disorders, depression and other medical conditions.

Savoring ties in with another skill too. Years of research back up the idea that practicing **gratitude** has benefits, including studies with Vietnam War veterans showing it helped increase well-being and decreased symptoms of PTSD, Moskowitz says.

Build this skill: Gratitude

- **Create anticipation:** Plan ahead for fun experiences so you can enjoy them even before they happen. Bryant remembers being a kid and planning "joy adventures" with his mom, little outings to take pleasure in the world around them. Now he and his 7-year-old granddaughter make lists of things to do together, always leaving a blank for surprises.
- **Relish the moment:** Bryant's favorite technique is mental time travel. When he visits with his granddaughter, he'll pretend for a second that she's all grown up. Then he feels like he's been granted a wish to spend time with her as a child again. "When you see it through those eyes as a second chance, you **savor** it more," he says.
- **Reminisce:** Extend a positive moment by telling someone about it, writing it down or creating a memento. Moskowitz suggests putting special photos into an album or app to **savor** favorite moments.

Beyond the classic practice of [gratitude journaling](#), there are other ways to try this. Moskowitz encourages creating visible displays of gratitude, like a gratitude wall or tree in your office where people can add post-it notes to praise co-workers.

Or you can submit a story to NPR's "[My Unsung Hero](#)" series, which shares stories of acts of kindness, both large and small, that have transformed lives. Make sure to tell your hero what they mean to you. A quick call or note will brighten their day – and yours.