

# Gratefulness Gatherings Host Guide

Welcome. We're glad you're interested in hosting a Gratefulness Gathering with A Network for Grateful Living. This is a profound opportunity to commune with others who care about deepening their understanding of and relationship with grateful living as an orientation to life. We appreciate your interest in creating space that allows gratefulness to flourish.

We want Gratefulness Gatherings to be meaningful, accessible, and safe experiences for all. With this in mind, we intend for this guide to support you in getting started with clarity and ease, and to help ensure sustainability in your role as a host.

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## Is hosting for me?

Hosting may be a good fit for you if you answer yes to all of the following:

- a) **I am interested in exploring grateful living as an orientation to life** and am committed to conversations that open minds and hearts to gratefulness.
- b) **I am aligned with A Network for Grateful Living's [mission, vision, and values](#).**
- c) **I am able to host one Gratefulness Gathering per month.** Generally, hosts can expect to spend around four hours each month coordinating, in addition to the time each meeting will take. We encourage prospective hosts to clearly and realistically consider whether they have space for this commitment in a way that will allow them to show up fully and with joy.
- d) **I am willing to fulfill the role of a host,** which includes planning (arranging a venue, promotions, collecting resources), facilitating meetings, and managing communication with both participants and A Network for Grateful Living.
- e) **I understand that showing up authentically with my personal experience of grateful living is my primary role as host.** You do not need to be an expert in grateful living or an expert facilitator. Your role as host is not to actively present or teach, but rather to *be* present, thoughtful, and self-aware; to listen actively; and to hold space for your experience and those of others.
- f) **I understand that I am joining a community of people with diverse backgrounds and diverse experiences of gratefulness.** You understand and value that it is part of your responsibility as a host to support safe, inclusive space for all people, as outlined in A Network for Grateful Living's [Community Engagement Guidelines](#).

If you have answered **yes** to all of these questions, please continue with your interest in becoming a host! Once you are set on becoming a host, please apply [online](#).



## Qualities of a Good Host

**Familiarity with the subject:** You are familiar with gratitude, gratefulness, and grateful living, and you have some personal experience to draw from.

**Friendly personality:** You enjoy the company of others, rich conversation, and helping people feel welcome and at ease.

**Communication skills:** You are committed to positive and mindful communication. You appreciate the opportunity to listen and to hold space for, and lift up, other voices. You feel comfortable helping to facilitate a conversation without dominating it. You feel comfortable navigating challenges and conflict.

**Availability:** You have the time needed - before, during, and after - to coordinate meaningful Gratefulness Gatherings. You are emotionally available to show up as your best self and to help others do the same.

## Role of a Host

### Before:

- a) Promote
- b) Schedule
- c) Develop loose agenda and collect resources

### During:

- a) Welcome participants
- b) Facilitate discussion
- c) Hold space
- d) Record experiences and insights

### After

- a) Share insights and stories with A Network for Grateful Living and (as appropriate) on social media
- b) Help maintain/encourage ongoing conversation via Facebook and email



## Planning

### Venue

Pick a venue that is safe, accessible (by public transportation, if possible), and semi-private.

### Timing

We suggest an ideal meeting time of 90 minutes -- this is enough time to allow for meaningful discussion with participation from lots of voices. But please decide what works best for your group, depending on the size and time available.

### Refreshments

Food draws people and brings them together...and is an easy opening to gratefulness. We suggest having food at your gathering in the form of simple snacks and drinks, a potluck, or hosting at a venue where refreshments are available for purchase.

### Costs

Gratefulness Gatherings should not have a cost or exclude those who cannot contribute.

You may find it difficult to find space that is free/affordable. In case you need to pay for space please consider the following options:

- Offer the Gathering without a request for contributions, regardless.
- Ask for a non-specific donation: This will obviously be variable. Participants will need a reminder at the start and end of the session. Please make it clear what the contribution is used for, so that it is in alignment with our non-profit model.
- Request a specific donation: As a reminder, participants should not be turned away if they cannot donate. Please make it clear what the contribution is used for so that it is in alignment with our non-profit model.



## Gratefulness Gatherings in Detail

### Overview

**Shared monthly themes:** We believe in the value of collective intention and are excited by the possibilities a shared monthly theme will create in terms of enabling engagement between Gratefulness Gathering groups.

Each month A Network for Grateful Living will send an email to all hosts with a reminder of the upcoming month's theme as well as suggested resources (articles, quotes, questions, poems, activities, practices, etc.) that can help inform conversation.

**Stand-alone Events:** Even with themes, Gratefulness Gatherings should be conducted as stand-alone events so that participants do not feel obligated to "sign up" for a year. Participants are welcome to attend as little or as often as they like -- and still feel connected to the conversation. We encourage hosts to facilitate with this in mind -- and encourage repeat/regular attendees to participate in a way that doesn't alienate new or less frequent attendees.

### Flow

**Arriving:** Begin with a moment of grounding -- a moment of meditative silence, a few deep breaths, a bell or singing bowl are all helpful methods to help people "arrive" in the space. The host (or another participant) might also share the [Gratefulness.org](https://www.gratefulness.org) Word for the Day, Poem-a-Month, or another brief reading.

**Introductions/Check-ins:** Conduct introductions at your first Gratefulness Gathering and whenever there are newcomers. Depending on the number of people at your Gratefulness Gathering and the amount of time available, you might also invite people to briefly check in: Share how they are feeling coming into the meeting, and share something that they are grateful for (remembering that we cannot be grateful for everything that comes our way, but even during challenging times we can often be grateful for opportunities that the situation presents, e.g. to receive comfort from friends or to take a stand).



**Discussion:** Use the monthly theme (more on this below) and suggested resources (in addition to any resources you personally collect) to guide the discussion. You might find it helpful to begin the conversation with thought-provoking questions or prompts, or you might simply ask participants to dive in with reflections. Regardless, be sure to encourage and support conversation that is grounded in positive communication, as outlined in the [Participant Agreement](#).

**Close:** Choose a meaningful closing for each meeting. You might end with a check-in during which each participant briefly shares a take-away and how they feel it will impact their practice of grateful living. Participants may also commit to a practice that they will do, sharing their experience at the next meeting. You might end as you started -- with a moment of silence, a collective breath, or a bell.

**\*Note:** After your Gratefulness Gathering begins to feel established, and depending on your comfort level, you may find it valuable to engage participants in aspects of shared facilitation -- offering openings/closings or facilitating conversation as long as these participants are fully in alignment with the [Participant Agreement](#).

### **Tips for Your First Gratefulness Gathering**

Your first Gratefulness Gathering (regardless of when it takes place) should focus on the theme "Gratefulness: Greater Than Gratitude." This will be important in establishing common language for participants around gratitude, gratefulness, and grateful living.

**[Participant Agreement:](#)** Please review and have participants sign the agreement.

### **New Participants**

Because Gratefulness Gatherings are conducted as stand-alone events, new participants may attend at any point. As much as possible, try to orient new participants by sharing resources related to the ABCs of grateful living. Please have all new participants review and sign the [Participant Agreement](#).



## **Schedule of 2018/2019 Themes**

### **All of the following are in the context of grateful living:**

Jan: Gratefulness: Greater Than Gratitude

Feb: The *Great Fullness* of Life

March: Practicing Grateful Living: Presence, Perspective, and Possibility

April: Treasuring the Body as It Is

May: Appreciating the Landscape of Our Emotions

June: Savoring the Spirit of Surprise

July: Cherishing Our Own Selves

Aug: Unleashing the Blessings of Connection

Sept: Holding the Heart of Grief and Loss

Oct: Celebrating Contentment as Enough

Nov: Belonging at Home with Nature

Dec: Walking the Path of Transformation: Bringing Healing to a Broken World

## **Communication**

### **Within Gratefulness Gatherings**

Hosts will manage communication for their Gratefulness Gatherings between meetings to help support continued energy and conversation. We recommend starting an email group and/or Facebook page for your Gratefulness Gatherings group (which, of course, would be optional for participants); the Facebook page can also be a helpful tool for promotion.



## **Between Hosts and A Network for Grateful Living**

The Gratefulness Gatherings Coordinator at A Network for Grateful Living will maintain regular communication with Gratefulness Gathering hosts, primarily via email. Once per month, an email will be sent to all hosts with the upcoming month's theme, suggested resources, and any other news/updates.

A Network for Grateful Living will also host quarterly webinars for hosts, primarily as orientation for new hosts, but accessible to all who want refreshers or have questions.

We intend for communication between A Network for Grateful Living and hosts to be open. Hosts are encouraged to reach out with questions and feedback at any time.

## **Engagement**

Gratefulness Gatherings should feel safe and contained within boundaries of trust and respect. While participants should understand that sharing in meetings happens within these boundaries, we also recognize that there is value in sharing insights and experiences outside of these gatherings.

As acknowledged in the Participant Agreement: All conversations are confidential. We ask that participants be mindful of the fact that participants may be sharing private, intimate experiences that would not be appropriate to share outside the group without permission. Hosts may discuss themes and anecdotes from gatherings with A Network for Grateful Living's Gratefulness Gathering Coordinator to improve the overall experience, but no direct names will be used without express permission.

Within these boundaries, We invite hosts to share meaningful experiences and stories with us and post appropriately on social media, tagging A Network for Grateful Living and using #GratefulnessGatherings when appropriate.

If an experience or story involves a specific individual or name, please seek permission from the individual before sharing.

**Once you are set on becoming a host, please [apply online](#).**

