



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR COMMENTARY

## Being grateful isn't just for Thanksgiving. We can start perfecting our skills right now.

An end-of-life doula and educator encourages us to give thanks whenever we can. Other readers have witty takes on downstate counties wanting to secede from Illinois and a West Ridge resident braces for Trump's second term.

By Letters to the Editor | Nov 13, 2024, 7:00am EST



As we approach the last Thursday of November, consider how to incorporate gratitude at Thanksgiving. Talk about what you're thankful for during grace. Or set up a small Thanksgiving tree, a reader suggests | [stock.adobe.com](https://stock.adobe.com)

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I care for people who often feel overwhelmed at the end of their lives. They're making advance care directives and checking practical items off a to-do list. There are emotional to-do items as well.

Amid a chaotic time, many of us will still feel the need to pause for a life review and make five essential statements:

- Thank you.
- I love you.
- I'm sorry.
- I forgive you.
- Goodbye.

Only one is really an "end-of-life" statement: Goodbye. The rest can be said at any time.

Let's start with the first one: Thank you. Many people tell me they're no good at expressing gratitude. They can't find the right words.

That's OK. Like anything, the more we practice, the better we get at it. Every year, Thanksgiving gives us the opportunity to practice the art of saying thank you in meaningful ways.

In the weeks leading up to Thanksgiving, my clients begin with a gratitude journal. They write down three things they are grateful for as they start or end each day. Sometimes my clients give thanks for just a few minutes at bedtime to help get their mind in a peaceful state for sleep.

Then they put aside some time to write a thank you note. They mail, text or email it a few days later. This is especially helpful if we want to thank someone who won't be at Thanksgiving dinner this year.

As we approach the last Thursday of November, consider simple ways to incorporate gratitude at Thanksgiving. Talk about what you're thankful for during grace. Or set up a small Thanksgiving tree.

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Place a pile of paper leaves next to the tree, along with a variety of pens for loved ones to write what they're grateful for. Then hang the leaves anywhere you like on the tree.

Sometime during the meal, maybe before dessert is served, go around the table and read the leaves out loud. Or silently read the leaves at your leisure.

The day will come when we must reckon with regrets, forgiveness and gratitude before letting go. Making some of these statements early on leads to a more peaceful death someday — and a more joyful life right now.

That's something we can all be grateful for.

*Catherine Durkin Robinson, end-of-life doula and educator, Lake View East*