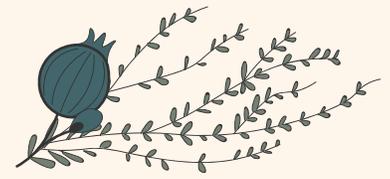


THANKSGIVING RITUALS OF CONNECTION



From The Gottman Institute



At The Gottman Institute, we have a group of colleagues that go by the moniker of “GROC,” or the Gottman Rituals of Connection crew. They plan office activities and company outings so we can share experiences and stay connected with each other. Sometimes it’s a Halloween costume contest; other times it’s a field trip to a Mariners game. Their enthusiasm is contagious, and they go the extra mile to make sure that we all feel appreciated and part of the team.

With their organization and efforts, we celebrated our own potluck Thanksgiving meal here around the conference room table, which helped employees from different departments who may not interact that often to reconnect with each other, somewhat like distant relatives. After the meal, we all sat down with dessert and took turns sharing what we are thankful for.

We were asked to share two things: one thing we’re thankful for at our workplace, and one thing we’re thankful for in our personal lives. In addition to sharing our gratitude verbally, we also wrote those things on paper leaves and tied them to the branches of a gratitude tree, which now resides in the office where anyone can take time to reflect on it.

The responses varied widely. Many expressed thanks for good health, beloved family, positive work/life balance, corgis, baseball, the camaraderie and fellowship of our coworkers, the kindness and empathy we regularly show one another, the excellent sense of humor that permeates our office, and the opportunity to work for such a wonderful company that has an overwhelmingly important and positive mission.

But one powerful response that stood out was gratitude for feeling safe in our workplace. And, if we extend that sentiment to relationships, we believe that everyone deserves to feel safe in their relationships, whether that means feeling safe with your partner and other family members, or whether that means that you help your child feel safe with you.

We encourage you to follow a similar way of sharing gratitude this Thanksgiving. Of course, follow your own family’s traditions, but we recommend going around the table to express gratitude after the meal. The group dynamic is a bit different at that point because you



will already have had the chance to converse and connect over the meal, and you'll be surrounded by loving family members to whom, hopefully, you'll feel a bit closer.

And, of course, nobody should feel forced to feel or express gratitude. The most authentic emotions are the ones that we feel naturally, without being prompted or told to feel. The following page includes a number of Gottman Rituals of Connection that you can use throughout your holidays to connect with your family, which, we hope, can help you build up those feelings of gratitude and appreciation on your own.

We wish you a Happy Thanksgiving, and we're grateful for you, too, because you all give us a reason to be better and do better at achieving our mission.

Gottman Thanksgiving Rituals of Connection

Rituals are defined as meaningful activities that families create to bring connection and stability to the family dynamic. Rituals hold relationships and family life together and create cohesiveness within family identity. If you want to plan your Thanksgiving meal in a specific way, we recommend going over this list a day or two ahead of time with your partner so that you can approach your Thanksgiving with some rituals of connection already in mind. Here are some ideas to help you plan.

- Take a walk with your family before dinner, or between dinner and dessert.
- When sharing what you are grateful for, specifically mention what has gone well for you or your family in the last year.
- When you express gratitude around the table, try to think of two or three specific things you are thankful for.
- Encourage relatives and friends who will attend your Thanksgiving meal to write down a short list of things they're grateful for before coming to dinner. That will give them a chance to think privately, on their own time, about how they want to express gratitude. You could even do this between dinner and dessert.
- Discuss family traditions regarding Thanksgiving with your partner and choose which ones you'd like to include this year and why.
- If there was a tradition that your family has done in the past, but perhaps doesn't do anymore, consider reviving it this year if it would be appropriate and meaningful for everyone attending dinner.
- If you have family members who live far away or cannot attend dinner, ask them to do a video chat with you and your family when you go around the table to give thanks.
- If there are specific cultural or spiritual practices that you or your partner have used in the past around Thanksgiving, discuss how to integrate those practices into your dinner this year.
- Write your own version of "grace" to say before the meal, and make sure it is inclusive for everyone attending.

