
June 29, 2023

In 2022, Stacy Batten said, her “whole year was on fire.”

Her husband died of cancer, and her father died after a long battle with Parkinson’s disease. Her mother was diagnosed with cancer. And she moved across the country from Seattle to Fairfield County, Conn., after selling the home that she had lived in for 26 years.

In her devastation, she noticed that she felt better when she looked for the good parts of each day. So she took a large Mason jar and turned it into a “gratitude jar,” which she now keeps on her night stand.

Every night, she writes down a few things that she is grateful for on a scrap of paper and drops it inside. They are often as simple as “I met a new neighbor” or “I took a walk with the dog and my mom.”

“The grief is still there,” Batten, 56, said. “But writing those daily notes has helped.”

Two decades ago, a landmark study led by the psychologist Robert A. Emmons sought to understand how people benefit from gratitude, a question that scientists had rarely explored until then.

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