



Giving Thanks Discussion Outline

Purpose: Explore gratitude as one part of living with a vestibular disorder—recognizing the people, experiences, personal growth, and small moments that have helped us along the way.

Opening

Living with a vestibular disorder can involve significant loss and change, so gratitude isn't always easy. Giving thanks doesn't mean ignoring what has been difficult or pretending to feel positive when we don't. We can be frustrated by what vestibular illness has taken from us and still recognize things we value or appreciate.

Today, we'll talk about some of those things—from the people who have supported us to strengths we may have discovered in ourselves.

Discussion prompts

- The power of community: Has connecting with other vestibular patients made you feel less alone? What does it mean to be around people who “get it” without needing a long explanation?
- Healthcare providers who made a difference: Is there a doctor, vestibular therapist, audiologist, counselor, or other provider who listened to you, believed you, or helped move your recovery forward? What did they do that was especially meaningful?
- Friends and family who stayed beside us: Who has continued to show up for you despite the invisible and sometimes unpredictable nature of vestibular illness? Was there a particular act of kindness or understanding that you remember?
- Support at work: Has an employer, supervisor, coworker, teacher, or school provided accommodations or flexibility that made it possible for you to keep working, learning, or participating?
- Recognizing your own resilience: Think about where you were when your vestibular journey began. What have you learned about your own strength or ability to adapt? What can you do today that once seemed impossible?
- Becoming “Version 2.0”: A vestibular diagnosis can change our lives and sometimes our sense of identity. Have you had to reinvent yourself? What parts of your old self have you reclaimed, and what new parts have emerged?

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L I F E R E B A L A N C E D

- Greater empathy and compassion: Has your experience made you more understanding of other people living with chronic or invisible conditions? Have you learned to extend more compassion to yourself?
- Lessons from the journey: Is there something vestibular illness has taught you that you might not have learned otherwise—about asking for help, setting boundaries, patience, priorities, relationships, or something else?
- Finding purpose through helping others: Has sharing your experience, participating in a support group, or helping another patient given your experience greater meaning?
- Spirituality and reflection: For those who find this meaningful, has illness changed or deepened your spiritual life, faith, meditation practice, or sense of connection?
- Being present: Has your experience changed the way you think about the future or helped you become more aware of the present moment?
- Appreciating the simple things: Vestibular illness can make ordinary activities feel extraordinary. What simple pleasure do you appreciate more now—a walk, reading, driving, cooking, seeing friends, enjoying nature, or simply having a lower-symptom day?

Closing reflection

Invite everyone who would like to participate to complete one or both of these sentences:

“Today, I’m thankful for...”

“Something I’m proud of myself for is...”

Remind the group that gratitude doesn't have to be profound. It might be gratitude for a supportive spouse, finally finding the right therapist, making it through a difficult year—or simply having a good cup of coffee this morning.

Leader tip: Be especially mindful of members who are newly diagnosed or experiencing severe symptoms. They may not yet see their vestibular experience as a source of growth, resilience, or gratitude. Avoid suggesting that illness happens “for a reason” or that people should be grateful for what it has taught them. Instead, create room for both realities: This has been incredibly hard, and there may still be things worth giving thanks for.

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