

Over the past decade, psychologists have not only identified the great social, psychological and physical health benefits that come from giving thanks, they've zeroed in on some concrete practices that help you reap those benefits.

Perhaps the most popular practice is to keep a gratitude journal or diary. The simple act of writing down the things for which we're grateful can have benefits including better sleep, fewer symptoms of illness, and more happiness among adults and kids alike.

The basic practice is straightforward. In many of the studies, people are simply instructed to record five things they experienced in the past week for which they're grateful. The entries are supposed to be brief – just a single sentence – and they range from the mundane ("waking up this morning") to the sublime ("the generosity of friends") to the timeless ("the Rolling Stones").

However, not everyone has found it to be helpful. Common underlying issues with people reporting no significant difference included the following:

- Journaling seemed to be a matter of 'just go through the motions'.
- Going for breadth over depth – focusing on superficial lists of many things rather than elaborating in detail on one particular thing.
- Not getting personal – focusing on others or things rather than themselves.
- Try subtraction, not just addition. One effective way of stimulating gratitude is to reflect on what your life would be like without certain blessings, rather than just tallying up all those good things.
- Savour surprises – record the unexpected, as these tend to elicit stronger levels of gratitude.
- Don't overdo it – if you find daily writing is too much then simply do it once or twice a week.

We (humans) adapt to positive events quickly, especially if we constantly focus on them. It is really about forcing yourself to pay attention to the good things in life you'd otherwise take for granted. Relish and savour your entries, don't hurry through like you are writing a grocery list.

Writing helps to organise thoughts, facilitate integration and helps you to

Gratitude

And Why it Matters



accept your own experiences and put them in context. In essence, it allows you to see the meaning of events going on around you and create meaning in your own life.

10 WAYS TO BECOMING MORE GRATEFUL

1 Keep a Gratitude Journal
Establish a daily practice in which you remind yourself of the gifts, grace, benefits and good things you enjoy. Setting aside time on a daily basis to recall moments of gratitude associated with ordinary events, your personal attributes or valued people in your life gives you the potential to interweave a sustainable life theme of gratefulness.

2 Remember the Bad
To be grateful in your current state, it is helpful to remember the hard times that you once experienced. When you remember how difficult life used to be and how far you have come, you set up an explicit contrast in your mind, and this contrast is fertile ground for gratefulness.

3 Ask Yourself Three Questions
Use the meditation technique known as Naikan, which involves reflecting on three questions:
● "What have I received from ___?"
● "What have I given to ___?"
● "What troubles and difficulty have I caused?"

4 Learn Prayers of Gratitude
In many spiritual traditions, prayers of gratitude are considered to be the most powerful form of prayer because through these prayers people recognise the ultimate source of all they are and all they will ever be.

5 Come to Your Senses
Through our senses – the ability to touch, see, smell, taste, and hear – we gain an appreciation of what it means to be

human and of what an incredible miracle it is to be alive. Seen through the lens of gratitude, the human body is not only a miraculous construction, but also a gift.

6 Use Visual Reminders
Because the two primary obstacles to gratefulness are forgetfulness and a lack of mindful awareness, visual reminders can serve as cues to trigger thoughts of gratitude. Often times, the best visual reminders are other people, photographs, trinkets or keepsakes.

7 Make a Vow to Practise Gratitude
Research shows that making an oath to perform a behaviour increases the likelihood that the action will be executed. Therefore, write your own gratitude vow, which could be as simple as "I vow to count my blessings each day," and post it somewhere where you will be reminded of it every day.

8 Watch your Language
Grateful people have a particular linguistic style that uses the language of gifts, givers, blessings, blessed, fortune, fortunate and abundance. In gratitude, you should not focus on how inherently good you are, but rather on the inherently good things that others have done on your behalf.

9 Go Through the Motions
If you go through grateful motions, the emotion of gratitude should be triggered. Grateful motions include smiling, saying thank you and writing letters of gratitude.

10 Think Outside the Box
If you want to make the most out of opportunities to flex your gratitude muscles, you must creatively look for new situations and circumstances in which to feel grateful.

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