



Gratitude

WORKBOOK

How to practice appreciation &
be more thankful in everyday life

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Introduction

“Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all of the others.”- Cicero

For many people it's difficult to find happiness in their lives because they never learn how to appreciate what they already have.

Instead they are always focusing on what they *want* to have, or what they think they *need* to find happiness - but often times happiness is about paying attention to the good things that are already happening all around us.

Psychology [research](#) is clear that gratitude plays an essential role in our physical and mental health. It can minimize stress, depression, and loneliness, while also improving our self-esteem, relationships, motivation, and overall life satisfaction. This simple 15-day workbook is designed to help you improve gratitude in your own life.

Each exercise takes no more than 5 minutes a day, but by the end of it you'll have a much richer appreciation for your life. I recommend you continue to build off of these tools and exercises into the future.

Please try to follow these exercises one day at a time. It may be tempting to skip ahead and complete it all at once, but it's important that you space it out within the 2 week span.

Day 1 - Start a Gratitude List

In a [study](#) published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, it was found that individuals who counted their blessings on a frequent basis were more likely to be happy than individuals who didn't.

This shows that creating a "Gratitude List" can be a very useful tool in improving our happiness and well-being. Please follow these directions to create a "Gratitude List" of your own:

- Create a Word document and title it "Gratitude List."
- Write down the first 5 things that come into your mind that you are grateful for.
- Take a moment to reflect on each of the things on your list and why you are grateful for them.

Save the document in a place where you'll remember it. We'll be going back and adding more to it throughout the course of this workbook.

Day 2 - Say "Thank You" More

When we say "thank you" it isn't just about good manners - the language we use on a daily basis influences our overall attitude in life. [Studies](#) show receiving a "thank you" also motivates people to be more kind and social.

For many of you this may be common-sense, but try your best to say "thank you" whenever it's appropriate:

- Someone holding the door for you.
- Buying something at a store.
- Someone helps you pick up something you dropped.
- Someone gives you a compliment.
- While driving, someone lets you go ahead of them.
- A co-worker brings in snacks or cookies for the office.

These are all small things - but they are all worthy of a small "Thanks," "I appreciate it," or a friendly hand gesture (such as when saying thanks to someone while driving).

People who don't follow these common courtesies tend to come off more bitter and angry at life. It's not a healthy attitude. Saying "thank you" isn't a lot of effort and with practice it'll become more natural and honest for you.

Most importantly, saying "thank you" just helps make the world a better place.

Day 3 - Name 5 People You're Grateful For

Now expand on your "Gratitude List" from Day 1 by naming 5 people in your life who you are grateful for.

- Open up your "Gratitude List"
- Create a section called "People"
- Write down 5 people you are grateful for in your life.
- Take a moment to reflect on each of the people on your list and why you are grateful for them.
 - What has each person done to help you?
 - How has each person made your life better?
 - Does each person know how grateful you are for them.
- Save the document.

Day 4 - Write A Thank You Letter

In a [study](#) published in the *Journal of Happiness Studies*, it was found that individuals who wrote a thank you letter to someone in their life showed an increase in positive emotion and life satisfaction, and a decrease in depressive symptoms.

Try writing a thank you letter of your own:

- Open up your "Gratitude List"
- Choose a person under the "People" section (or add someone new).
- Open up a new document titled "Thank You Letter"
- Write between 400-600 words expressing to the person why you are grateful for them and why you appreciate them in your life.
- It doesn't have to be super emotional or serious, but at least be honest and sincere about it.
- Send the letter to them via mail or email.

Don't tell the person you were instructed to do this exercise - just do it on your own. Even if it feels "out of character" for you, it's important you get used to this mind-set of expressing our gratitude more freely.

Day 5 - Name 5 Skills or Talents You're Grateful For

Continue to build on your "Gratitude List" by now identifying 5 skills or talents you have that you are grateful for.

- Open up your "Gratitude List".
- Create a section called "Skills and Talents".
- Write down 5 skills or talents you possess that you are grateful for in your life.
- Take a moment to reflect on each of these skills on your list and why you are grateful for them.
 - How has each skill improved your life or made your life easier.
- Save the document.

Day 6 - How to Let Go of What You No Longer Have

One hard lesson of life is that nothing is permanent, and what we have today may not be what we have tomorrow. Everyone experiences loss sometimes, and for many of us it can be a very difficult thing to overcome.

The more we cling to what we no longer have, the more it eats us up and makes us depressed. Here are some guidelines to help let go of any loss in your life:

- **Remember the good times.** Focusing on positive memories allows you to appreciate something and what it has done to improve your life, even when it is no longer with you.
- **Focus on what you still have.** When we lose anything in our lives it can become so much of a focus that we forget about everything else we have to live for. Try re-focusing on all the things you still have to be grateful for.
- **Channel it into something productive.** The loss of something important to us can potentially be channelled into something positive and productive. For example, the death of a loved one from cancer may motivate you to help and donate toward others who may be suffering in a similar situation. In this way, the thing you lost "lives on" by how it influences your future - and what you do in its memory.

When you lose something in your life, it's natural to feel some sadness and grief - and you shouldn't beat yourself up over that. It's part of life, especially when you lose something that you have always considered a deep part of you.

However, life continues to go on and you don't need to stay in that negative cycle forever. It's healthy to eventually move past it by

focusing back on your present life, what you still have to be thankful for, and what is still in your power to change.

Look back and remember every now and then, but stay committed to the future. You still have a life to live.

Day 7 - Name 5 Places You're Grateful For

The next step in improving your "Gratitude List" is to name 5 places you're grateful for.

- Open up your "Gratitude List"
- Create a section called "Places"
- Write down 5 places you're grateful for in your life.
- Take a moment to reflect on each of these places on your list and why you are grateful for them.
 - How has each place made your life better?
- Save the document.

Day 8 - Name 5 Material Objects You're Grateful For

Add more to your "Gratitude List" today by naming 5 material objects you're grateful for.

- Open up your "Gratitude List"
- Create a section called "Material Objects"
- Write down 5 material things you're grateful for in your life.
- Take a moment to reflect on each of these things on your list and why you are grateful for them.
 - How has each material object helped make your life easier and happier?
- Save the document.

Day 9 - Imagine Your Life Without It

One very effective way to improve your gratitude for something is to imagine how your life would be without it.

This technique is sometimes called “negative visualization,” and the idea is that when you imagine how much worse your life could be it helps you better appreciate how your life is right now.

Try this:

- Choose something from your “Gratitude List”
- Imagine how your life is because of this person, skill, place, or thing.
- Now imagine how your life would be if you had to live without it.
- Ask yourself, “How would my life be worse without this?”
- Visualize and imagine situations in your life where you don’t have it, but could really benefit from it if you did.

A more advanced version:

- Imagine the very worst possible scenarios in your life. Just how bad could things really get? Put yourself in the shoes of people who experience really, really terrible things - then be grateful those things didn’t happen to you.
- (You can get a similar effect by watching really tragic movies, according to one [study](#).)

This type of exercises can be a useful tool for helping you put things into perspective and see the bigger picture behind your life.

Day 10 - Dedicate Something To Someone

Dedicating a goal or creative pursuit to someone other than ourselves is a great way to express more gratitude and appreciation in life.

There are a number of ways you can do this. Here are just a few examples:

- Writing a short story or poem
- Drawing, painting, or sculpting
- Photography
- Making music
- Public speaking
- Starting a community group, non-profit organization, or small business.
- Pursuing a goal that the other person would be proud of you for.

As I mentioned before, the final form of gratitude is to take our positive feelings and transform them into positive action.

If we don't express our gratitude in some way, then it only exists in our minds. To truly show your gratitude toward someone, you should try to do things that you can physically show for it in the real world.

Day 11 - Be Grateful for Common Things

So far you've added people, places, skills, and material objects to your "Gratitude List." These are key categories you can continue to expand upon as you improve your list.

However, what other types of things do you have to be grateful for?

Often times the most common things are the things we most easily take for granted. We tend to underestimate just how many good, little things we have going on in our lives on a daily basis.

Consider these "common things" that often improve the quality of our lives, but which we so easily take for granted:

- Being alive and experiencing the world through our senses - sight, sound, taste, smell, and touch.
- Having a safe place to sleep every night.
- Having food to eat every day.
- Having a job and being able to make a living.
- Enjoying good music, books, TV, movies, video games, and other forms of entertainment.
- Modern day technology – cell-phones, transportation, the Internet, washing machines - all the stuff that has been invented over the last few hundred years that has improved our lives dramatically.
- Enjoying nature, parks, and beaches.
- Living in a world that is largely better off than it was a hundred years ago.

Not all of these things may be true for you exactly, but the ones that are true are very important to be grateful for. We often forget all the good things in life that we experience on a daily basis, but only because we are so familiar with them.

Day 12 - Do a Random Act of Kindness

Doing a small act of kindness is a great way to express a more positive and appreciative outlook on life.

When we do nice things for others, it strengthens our beliefs that we are good people living in a good world, even if it isn't always perfect.

Here are super simple acts of kindness you can practice on a daily basis. Choose just one and do it today:

- Give someone a genuine compliment.
- Smile at a stranger.
- Plan a fun social event for friends, family, and/or co-workers, like going to a bar or restaurant.
- Be a good listener when someone needs to vent.
- Leave a generous tip for a friendly waiter/waitress.
- Print out inspirational quotes and post them around town.

Day 13 - Volunteer and Give Back to Society

According to [research](#), volunteering has shown to have numerous benefits on both our physical and mental health.

The psychological benefits include increases in positive emotions and life satisfaction, decreases in stress and anxiety, and a strengthened sense of meaning and purpose in our lives.

When we spend time helping others, it takes us out of our “limited view” of the world and allows us to see the “bigger picture” - especially how our lives are often much more fortunate than some other people’s situations.

Volunteering gives you the opportunity to “give back” to those who are in more need than you are. This doesn’t only improve your appreciation for your own life, but it also gives you a healthy sense of pride for contributing to society in a positive way.

There are many opportunities to volunteer and help others in your community. Here are some places that often offer volunteer work:

- Hospitals
- Schools
- Churches
- Soup Kitchens
- Animal Shelters
- Charities
- Activist Groups
- Museums or Art Galleries

Try your best to schedule some time this week volunteering somewhere. Or, if you really don't have the time, consider donating to a charity or non-profit organization that you believe is doing good work.

Finding ways to give back to society is one of the best ways of expressing gratitude.

Day 14 - Find the Good In Every Experience

At its core, gratitude is about finding the good aspects about every experience you have.

Of course life can be painful and depressing sometimes, but we can still take something from every experience and use it to appreciate life more.

Try to be more grateful for your experiences, even the negative ones, by following these guidelines:

- Identify an experience in your life that you consider “negative.”
- Ask yourself, “What are some positive things I could take from this experience?” For example:
 - “What lessons did this experience teach me about life?”
 - “How can I take this knowledge and apply it to my future?”
 - “How can my pain be transformed into growth?”

Building this attitude toward your everyday experiences is one of the best things you can do to improve your gratitude. It allows you to accept everything as something that can serve a bigger and better purpose in your life.

Day 15: Build Off Your Gratitude List

Your "Gratitude List" is something you should continue to focus on and build off even after this workbook is finished.

The more things you have listed, the more powerful of a resource it becomes in reminding you of all the good in your life.

- Open up your "Gratitude List"
- Add 5 new things to your list.
- Take a moment to reflect on each of these things on your list and why you are grateful for them. How have they improved your life and made you happier?
- Save the document.

Keep in mind that anything can be added to your "Gratitude List," however small or big. For example:

Small things:

- "The cup of coffee I had today from the local cafe."
- "That stranger who gave me a nice compliment."
- "Getting an A+ on my Math exam."

Big things:

- "Having a loving wife/husband who supports me through my struggles."
- "Becoming a successful business owner."
- "Winning a free vacation."

Healthy gratitude allows us to appreciate everything, no matter it's size or significance. Anything that is good *is* good, so we should be happy about it all and not take any of it for granted.

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