

HAPPINESS FOUNDATIONS

MASTER CLASS WORKBOOK



THE HAPPINESS SQUAD

PRACTICE 3.2

DAILY GRATITUDE JOURNAL



“Cultivate an attitude of gratitude to transform the mundane into the magical.” —A. Kothari

Practice Overview:

Gratitude journaling is one of the most researched and most effective interventions to increase happiness. Keeping a gratitude journal can help you become happier and more optimistic while increasing the likelihood of achieving your goals. This micro-practice will train your eyes to better see all the blessings, big and small, that exist in your life.



DAILY GRATITUDE JOURNAL

The Benefits of Practicing Gratitude:

Professors Emmons, McCullough, and Tsang found that grateful people don't ignore the negative aspects of life—they simply choose to appreciate the positive as well. Below are some of the benefits that can be acquired from a daily gratitude practice.

- **Mental Health:** Gratitude enables higher levels of positive emotions (e.g. joy, pleasure, happiness) and lower levels of uncomfortable emotions (e.g. envy, resentment, frustration, anger). A gratitude practice reduces stress by 34% and increases the ability to overcome trauma and experience post-traumatic growth.
- **Physical Health:** Gratitude is correlated with better sleep and less fatigue, a stronger immune system, less aches/pains, and lower levels of cellular inflammation.
- **Emotional Health:** Gratitude is shown to help create a higher ability to regulate emotions, a higher level of empathy, and reduced aggression. It contributes towards greater social cohesion and healthier friendships.

Why It Works:

Research suggests that the act of writing out your thoughts versus simply thinking them increases your awareness and the fidelity of the positive emotions you experience.

This allows you to have a higher resiliency when faced with challenges and safeguards you against lasting anxiety. Gratitude helps you overcome your brain's negativity bias and reframe your outlook to focus on the positive. Gratitude pulls you into the present moment and allows you to participate more in life as you see the value of the people and things around you.

Supporting Research:

[Emmons, R. A., & McCullough, M. E, *Counting blessings versus burdens: An experimental investigation of gratitude and subjective well-being in daily life.*](#)

People who wrote weekly in a gratitude journal, consciously focusing on counting their blessings for 10 weeks, experienced several physical, emotional, and interpersonal benefits, including more positive moods and optimism about the future.

[Todd B. Kashdan, Gitendra Uswatte, and Terri Julian, "Gratitude and Hedonic and Eudaimonic Well-being in Vietnam War Veterans"](#)

In a study of persons with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), daily gratitude was associated with each dimension of daily well-being.

Supplemental Resources:

- [The Little Book of Gratitude by Robert Emmons](#)
- [The Art of Happiness by The Dalai Lama](#)

*Links in blue text



MICRO-PRACTICE STEPS

01

Grab a notebook, piece of paper, use the back pages of this workbook, or open a notes tab on your phone. Make sure that you have a method of journaling that is natural and easy for you. You can use the gratitude map from the book *Hardwired for Happiness* as a guide to bring attention to the different aspects of your life in which you can practice gratitude.

02

Over this week, **select a time** to journal your gratitude, writing down **three to five things** you are grateful for that day.

Some tips for you to consider:

- **Go for specificity in your entries.** The more specific you can be, the better! This can help you identify why you are grateful as well as recognize all the small things you may, unconsciously, take for granted.

For example: “I’m grateful to my wife for tending to the garden and making it look beautiful” is much more effective than vaguely writing “I’m grateful for my family.”

- **Go for depth over length.** Be as detailed as possible on why you are grateful for the thing or person you are writing about. Writing in detail about what you are grateful for will have a much more positive affect on your happiness than a longer, superficial list.

Visualize the absence in addition to the presence of gifts. Consider what your life would be like without certain people or things. We often don’t appreciate the good until it is gone.

03

After you finish journaling, **pause, reflect**, and check in with how you are feeling in your mind, body, and heart.



WAYS TO INCREASE SUCCESS

ENVIRONMENT

Find a quiet moment in your day. Give yourself a **few minutes to reflect**. In the beginning, if you're feeling stuck you may want to have the gratitude map close by or pull up your schedule to help reflect on the different opportunities for gratitude.

MINDSET

Say this mantra: **"I want to cultivate an attitude of gratitude to transform the mundane into the magical."**

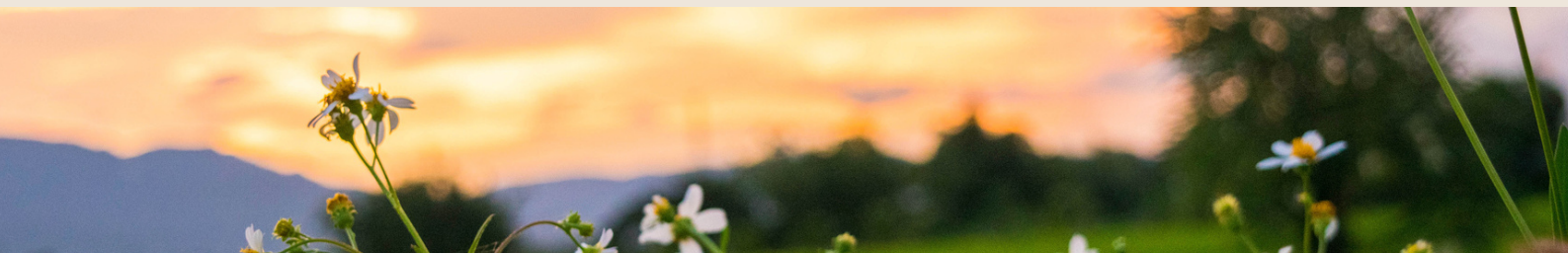
PROMPTS

Attach this exercise to something you already do daily. You could lay your notebook by the bedside table, next to the coffee maker, or on your desk for school work.

Over time, you can reduce frequency to just once a week (e.g., doing it on Sundays) as per the guidance of Prof. Sonja Lyubomirsky, who studied the effects of gratitude journaling extensively.

REWARD

Once you've finished, do something small to celebrate. Draw a smiley face, do a quick happy dance, double fist pump into the air, or just simply smile. **Do anything that sparks joy.**



SUPPLEMENTAL EXHIBITS



GRATITUDE MAP








Use the gratitude map above to spark ideas of new opportunities to be grateful.
Feel free to use the space below to sketch your own gratitude map.



PRACTICE 3.2

TRACK YOUR PROGRESS

Fill in each circle for every day over the next two weeks that you complete the practice. You can date it, color it in, add a smiley face—whatever works best for you. Once you have tracked, take a moment to celebrate. Give yourself a hug, do a little dance—the “sillier” the better! Science shows that the best way to cement a habit is to reward yourself as these small acts release dopamine, (the feel good chemical), which helps you continue your practice.







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