

Practicing Gratitude

There is a law of life that can be found in all religious and spiritual traditions and, if you think about it, within your own experience. It is this: what you focus on multiplies. Or, in other words, what you believe, you will receive. Put yet another way, what you think about, you experience.

Think about it. It is simple and profound—a real “duh” moment. Whether you attribute it to God, the law of attraction, magic, cognitive wiring, or whatever, what you dwell on in your mind fills your life.

Try this: focus on the color orange and notice how many times you see it today.

It is so simple! It is so powerful! If you focus on the experiences you like, you'll experience more of them!

10 Things to be Grateful for Today (No Matter What)

There is always something to be grateful for. For the days when it is hard to see those things, this list may help:

1. The sun came up today and you got another day, with all its potential for growth and change, if you so wish. Your day is full of pure potential.
2. There is beauty around you everywhere. In nature. In people. In yourself. Seek it.
3. Your basic needs are being met or, by definition, you wouldn't be alive. Notice how you are provided for.
4. Six billion people share the planet with you. Someone shares your experience. Someone wants to help you.
5. You have choice and, even in the most miniscule ways, you can choose to begin to redirect your life in this moment.
6. As your life goes on, you are building life experiences—life lessons—that increase your understanding and appreciation of life.
7. You have the opportunity to give to others today. Giving feels good and stimulates energetic flow.
8. The Universe colludes for your success. All around forces conspire for your happiness.
9. Your body serves you to the best of its ability.
10. There is gravity and osmosis and photosynthesis and all sorts of miracles of science you don't have to think about but would die without.

How to Start a Gratitude Practice

To have gratitude is one thing, to practice gratitude is another. Begin to make gratitude your default way of experiencing your day by making a conscious decision now: be

grateful for the good things in your life and choose to focus primarily on them. To get started, leverage the power of habit by implementing daily actions that help you experience gratitude. After a few weeks, you will experience gratitude automatically. Be careful not to focus on the things you want but don't have; you'd be reinforcing the experience of wanting but not having. Identify and give thanks for the pleasures, comforts and opportunities that surround you. Here are some practices you can implement on a daily basis to initiate your gratitude practice. Use any or all of them:

1. Convert complaints to thanks. When you catch yourself complaining (even if only in your mind), quickly shift your focus to some nugget of good instead. Wearing a rubber band on your wrist and promptly snapping it when you catch yourself complaining is a good way to quickly reprogram this thinking.
2. Keep a gratitude journal or list. There are so many versions of this—a traditional journal, emailing yourself from your phone, keeping a document up while you work on your computer, posting on your Facebook page—choose the one that works for you.
3. Create a gratitude partnership. Significant others and best friends are good for this. Agree to connect at a specific time/way each day to share gratitudes. Involving others in your gratitude practice increases its power exponentially, and creates accountability that strengthens and reinforces the practice.
4. Give as much as you can. This can be time, money or energy, or simply committing to offer your personal “gift” to everyone you encounter.
5. Say “thank you” out loud, sincerely, as often as possible, to as many people as possible.
6. Write thank you notes (or LinkedIn recommendations) to business contacts. End your work day by identifying five (or whatever number you decide) people who increased your success or joy this day, and begin the next day by writing thank you notes to those people. This envelopes your work day in perpetual gratitude.
7. Acknowledge, with gratitude, your own achievements each day. Look back at the items you checked off your To Do list. Review your planner. Give yourself hugs, gold stars and smiley faces.
8. Stop before meals to give thanks for food that nourishes and strengthens you. If this echoes a childhood practice, feel free to alter it to make it meaningful to you now.
9. Use a timer (or a watch that beeps on the hour) to remind yourself to stop and list your gratitudes in the moment.
10. Reach out to people from your past—with letters or Facebook—to thank them for contributions they made to your life, success and happiness.

These practices will help get gratitude flowing in your life. A life filled with gratitude not only feels good, it also increases awareness and enjoyment of the blessings that already surround you, and keeps good things flowing toward you. It is a simple and powerful way to profoundly change your daily experience. Begin your gratitude practice now.

Thank you!

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