

Your guide for starting a daily gratitude practice

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People who practice gratitude on a regular basis consistently report physical, psychological, and social benefits. It is one of the most simple and effective health interventions out there and can profoundly impact other areas of your life. Let's dig into what it is, how it works, and ways to practice!

What is it?

Gratitude is a sense of wonder, thankfulness, or appreciation. It can come very naturally when you are in a beautiful place, or are with people you deeply care about. We can also cultivate gratitude when we pause and think of experiences, moments, people, or a quality about yourself that we appreciate.

Why practice gratitude? It can improve your health and outlook and can equip you to handle life's challenges from a more resilient place. Additionally, gratitude can make you a more effective employee, leader, friend, spouse, parent and all-around person!

How does it work? There is a saying in neuroscience that neurons that fire together wire together. This means that when our brain goes through the same thinking process over and over it starts to build neural superhighways, or shortcuts.

The human brain is constantly watchful for threats and has a strong "negativity bias," meaning that our brains tend to both recognize negative stimuli more readily but also dwells on them more than they do positive events. In current times, we may perceive threats in places such as the news media (do you remember the last good news story you heard?), in traffic, or even in your email, or daily to-do list!

By taking time each day to consider the things you are grateful for, you are wiring your brain to be resilient and to be able to handle challenges more effectively. Gratitude doesn't change the world, but it can help you to have a more positive perspective on it!

How do you do it?

Three Good Things Exercise. One of the easiest ways to practice gratitude is to write down three good things each day. You can think of people, places, moments, good attributes you have, hobbies, or literally anything -- the more detail the better. Practicing before bed has been shown to reduce cortisol levels and improve sleep! Each day put your things in a jar and watch it fill up with all the things you are grateful for.

Write a thank you note. Think of someone you appreciate and let them know. We often think the people in our lives know how much they mean to us, but often we don't express our feelings of gratitude. Leaning into the discomfort and sharing our gratitude has been proven to increase happiness!

Know your ABCs. Think of a few things that start with the letter A that you are grateful for... apples, access to water and food, Argentinian food, then move to the letter B...books that inspire, bonfires, brain puzzles, next is the letter C, D, E and so on. This exercise requires you to use different parts of the brain to search for good things intentionally. The more you practice, the more you will notice your mind gravitating toward gratitude in times of struggle.

How do you make it stick? As with any new habit, gratitude requires intentional thought at first. Think of a time of day that will be best for you to practice. You may like to do this first thing in the morning, or right before bed, or perhaps on your commute to work in your mind. Regardless of what time of day you choose, try to stick to that same time so your brain starts to look forward to this activity.

Join the challenge! Join us December 13 – 17, from 9-9:15 a.m. for a 5-day gratitude challenge! Every morning we will feature an inspiring person who has experienced profound benefits from a daily gratitude practice. During each session, we will practice being grateful together in an effort to support each other in building this healthy habit. Register through the [Gratitude Challenge Event Registration Page](#) to receive email updates and details.

We will also be hosting a webinar on this topic on Thursday, December 9 from 10-11 a.m. CST titled **Gratitude: Science & Practical Application**. Register to attend through this [GotoWebinar Registration Link](#).