

Practice Gratitude

Practicing gratitude can be a game-changer: it has far reaching effects, from improving our mental health to boosting our relationships with others. Living your life with gratitude helps you notice the little wins—like the bus showing up right on time, a stranger holding the door for you, or the sun shining through your window when you wake up in the morning. Each of these small moments strings together to create a web of well-being that, over time, strengthens your ability to notice the good.

Building your capacity for gratitude isn't difficult. It just takes practice. The more you can bring your attention to that which you feel grateful for, the more you'll notice to feel grateful for!

1. **Start by observing.** Notice the thank yous you say. Just how much of a habitual response is it? Is it a hasty aside, an afterthought? How are you feeling when you express thanks in small transactions?
2. **Pick one interaction a day.** When your instinct to say “thanks” arises, stop for a moment and take note. Can you name what you feel grateful for, even beyond the gesture that's been extended? Then say thank you.

Here are some simple ways to become 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. Recalling moments of gratitude associated with ordinary events, your personal attributes, or valued people in your life gives you the potential to interweave a sustainable theme of gratefulness into your life.
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.** Meditate on your relationships with parents, friends, siblings, work associates, children, and partners using these three questions: “What have I received from __?”, “What have I given to __?”, and “What troubles and difficulties have I caused?”
4. **Share Your Gratitude with Others.** Research has found that expressing gratitude can strengthen relationships. So the next time your partner, friend or family member does something you appreciate, be sure to let them know.

4. 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. Oftentimes, the visual reminders are other people.

5. Make a Vow to Practice Gratitude. Research shows that making an oath to perform a behavior 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.

