

Hello. In this lesson, we're going to talk about how to take the first step. In self care. And for me, that is a three-minute daily practice that I call the miracle minutes. And before I get into the first miracle minute, I want to talk briefly about why we do this practice.

We do it because. If you're feeling unhappy in any way, I can pretty much guarantee you that your mind is cycling negative thoughts.

Here are some examples of the kind of negative thoughts that I meet. Why am I so fat? I'm such a failure when it comes to X, Why is so-and-so such a jerk? Why am I so weird? Why did I say that? How come he or she is so much better at X (fill in the blank) than me?

So this is not to put you down or give yourself a reason to beat yourself up. You're not alone. You have a lot of company. My mind is a crazy hot mess, plenty of the time. And I think it's fair to say that a majority of people spend a lot of time in their waking hours in negative thought loops and negative self-talk. So here's the thing. without changing the way you think there is no way you can improve your life.

You have to break the negative thought loops before you can grow and create a path to a new life. And then you ask how do you do that?

So, the first thing and the one most important thing that will help you break out of negative thought loops is super, super, super simple. It's gratitude, of all of the things that I teach, gratitude is the simplest, the easiest to do. And it's one of the most effective. So a daily practice of gratitude will change your mind and change your life. And that may sound like a big exaggeration, but I know this to be true.

I've seen the impact that has had on my life and on the lives of other people. If you do this practice and literally nothing else, your life will begin to change for the better. So let's look at why that is.

I love that Cicero said that gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues of the parent of all others. So gratitude's important for so many reasons, not the least of the reasons is that when you're in gratitude, you literally are the happy and fulfilled kind of person that you wish to be. For that moment, the moment you are saying the gratitude and you're feeling it, you are happy, you are fulfilled. And that seems so simple, but I want you to reflect on that for a minute.

So, at the moment that you express the gratitude you are experiencing in that moment, a kind of happiness and fulfillment that most of us feel like we're missing in our lives. So, we're constantly looking for it and we forget that it's available to us right now. If we choose to practice. Being grateful.

So his holiness, the Dalai Lama often talks about how positive emotions like gratitude have a demonstrably positive effect on our lives. All negative thoughts and emotions are not useful and lead to negative impacts.

This makes a lot of sense to me. So for example, anger could lead you to lose your job, Frustration and stress can harm your health, Jealousy can hurt your relationships, Fear and feelings of inadequacy, can stop you from going after your dreams and overwhelm can paralyze you.

On the other hand, positive thoughts and emotions have demonstrably positive effects on your life. Like love and compassion. Bring you closer. Connected with other people. Self-confidence motivates you to take action towards your dreams. Enthusiasm makes you attractive to other people, moves you forward. Altruism connects you with other people and often brings good things back to you. So serenity is good for your mental and physical health.

Gratitude is a huge example of the positive effects of a positive emotion. Here is some of the things that have been linked to a practice of gratitude, stronger social relationships, greater life satisfaction, less stress, better sleep, lower inflammation, less depression, lower blood pressure, reduced physical pain.

What's not to love about all that?.

If you want to learn more, you can explore the work of Robert A. Emmons. I'm not sure if I'm saying his name right, but he is a professor of psychology at UC Davis. And he's an expert on the science of gratitude.

So honestly, if I could give you just one tool to change the trajectory of your life, this would be it. And as this quotation says,

In daily life, we must see that it is not happiness that makes us grateful, but gratefulness that makes us happy.

So I'm, I hope I'm convincing you that practicing gratitude is the simplest. And also one of the most core things you need to do to change your life, the way you change, the way you think and the results in your life.

Now let's look at how to actually practice gratitude.

So the simplest way I've found is to take one miracle minute a day to say, or write things that you're grateful for. It doesn't matter how you do it. You can write it on a piece of paper. You can say it out loud or just think it in your mind.

My husband and I say three to five gratitudes every day after breakfast. We do it like this.

I will say, what are you grateful for? And he'll say we are healthy. And I'll say, I'm grateful, it's raining. And he'll say, I'm grateful that we have good food to eat. And we go on like that.

Usually we kind of holler them out with a lot of enthusiasm, which is kind of silly, but it also feels amazing. And if we miss that for any reason, I just say this to myself, just a list of things that I'm grateful for. It always puts a smile on my face and plenty of times it will bring tears of joy to my eyes. And if you want to set a timer to make sure you're getting a full minute, you can do that. I think I used to

set a timer, but these days we just give a list of like three to five or 10. How many things you feel like things. And so by doing this practice early in the day, I set my mind on a positive path for the day. And I just want to contrast this with the way I often used to think before I started doing self care. So I used to think... Crap, I didn't call my mom yesterday. It looks really crappy and cold out there. I have too much to do. I suck in my business and I'll never be able to retire from UCLA. I wish I didn't have to go to work today.

Can you see how my day might go very differently if I start the day out with these normal crappy thoughts compared to starting with gratitude?

I'd love for you to try the gratitude practice every day for at least a week. And you can't do it wrong. You can't do it too much. You can spend one minute thinking deeply about one thing you're grateful for. Or you could say a bunch of different gratitudes in one minute. It doesn't matter.

And I've created a gratitude practice worksheet to help you get started with your practice. And here are a few of the ideas from the worksheet. The worksheet will be available to you.

So, here's some big things to be grateful for. I'm grateful for... a roof over my head, the beauty of the night sky, basic mental health, clean, running water

Places to be grateful for. I'm grateful for... Yosemite, Viks Indian Chaat. My favorite restaurant, Tibet, Starbucks. I know you're not supposed to be grateful for Starbucks, but I do like Starbucks.

Education or training to be grateful for. I'm grateful for... meditation training, Toastmasters, a masters in literature, Brook Castillo's self coaching course

Stuff that we feel with our senses to be grateful for it. Like... The smell of Jasmine , fall leaves, A hot shower, The smell of coffee,

There are more in the worksheet, and once you get started, you realize that there's almost an infinite number of things that you have to be grateful for. You just need to start looking for them.

When you do these exercises. One key thing to do is to ask yourself what the gratitude feels like in your body? Where do you feel it? Is it in your head, your chest, your stomach. Is it heavy or light? Is it still or moving? Does it have a color?

So for example, for me, sometimes gratitude is like a warm, tingly, pinkish, white, cloudy feeling in my chest. Often there's a fullness and tears in my eye. That feels warm and kind of joyful. A reason you want to feel the gratitude in your body is to really connect with the gratitude and really anchor it in your mind and your life.

Another way to practice gratitude is to write a letter of gratitude to somebody. It's super simple. You write a letter to someone expressing all the things you are grateful for about them. You benefit, even if you don't send it. So the letter can be just two or three paragraphs long, and here's some ideas to spark your thoughts for your letter.

So, I've been meaning to let you know that blah, blah, blah. I admire X saying about you. I'm grateful that you did or said, or gave X thing. I appreciate you because... I remember that time when you, or when we, bla bla bla, I've learned X from you (and that you want to say something positive). You contributed X to making my day, my life, my job, my relationship better.

You get bonus points for handwriting, your letter, you get extra bonus points for sending it to the person. And one thing I wanted to encourage you is to avoid letting perfectionism creep in here. So perfectionism is a problem for you. Then I want you to aim for a letter that's a B minus. It doesn't need to be an A-plus.

I have an old mentor chain whose name is Shane Sams, and he always says done is better than perfect. I think that's really good.

So, most people find gratitudes simple to do, but the one question that comes up about them is this. Is it okay to repeat the same gratitude? It's like, sure. I'd say it's fine to repeat any of your gratitudes. Like on a day after day, as long as you, they don't start to feel rot or unfresh in any way. So I usually say something like I'm grateful for my health every single day and it never ever gets old.

Okay. That's it for gratitude and I'll see you in the next lesson.