GRATITUDE PRACTICER

"Positive energy can bring us more of what we want in our lives"

Where does gratitude fit in your life now? It's easy to blink and have days, weeks, months and years blow by. Time is irreplaceable. What we do with it can be too. What if you made a value shift to make a conscious effort to make a conscious effort?

We have practiced mindfulness several times already and will several times more. While gratitude functions to ground us in the present, concentrated mindfulness on gratitude itself is a unique, life-enriching experience.

If you have yet to develop this skill, incorporating gratitude into your days may seem effortful at first. But, once you experience more of it, you'll have the urge to make it second nature. If you somehow do nothing more in your Life Upgrade than turn gratitude into a habit, you will have succeeded.

One of the easiest ways to gain momentum is to fold gratitude into your existing daily routines. Do you brush your teeth twice a day? AWESOME! From now on, as you mindlessly put that personal care habit on autopilot, make a mindful effort to experience gratitude. Did you notice the operative word? Again, gratitude must be experienced. We're not talking about mental checkboxes. Extend your thoughts to feel them. Extend your feelings to voice them. Extend your voice to be in tune with the natural forces that attract what is in harmony with yourself. Elevate your vibration. Practice.

You've taken the first step with your Gratitude Inventory. If you think of those as items on a menu, your step here is to fine-dine. Again, if the Law of Attraction isn't your thing, then just focus on experiencing gratitude for its life-enriching power and stick with that.

Just to reiterate, when something vibrates at a certain frequency, it naturally resonates with and attracts things with the same frequency. We will attract into our experience that with which we are vibrationally synchronous. It also gives added meaning to those who believe in sending good vibes and among those who are open to receiving them.

Gratitude will accelerate you through your growth and amplify success more than just about any amount of hard work. That's not to say the two are far from being mutually exclusive.

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ACTIVITY 1 – FOLD GRATITUDE INTO YOUR DAYS (THE NEXT 3 DAYS, THEN ONGOING)

Part A: Embed Routines

We already have the toothbrushing example. Now inventory the rest of your daily routine to identify other "slots" to embed gratitude practices. These can be simple moments, such as when your feet touch the floor first thing in the morning and leave it at bedtime. What else? Might other parts of your morning routine be worthwhile to give your attention to gratitude? What about during your workouts or daily walks? Keep going. These can be a little as one or two minutes at a time.

When practicing, try to concentrate on just one thing at a time and stick with it. Focus and amplify your experience with gratitude to connect as deeply within yourself as possible. Expect the best. Your mind will wander often, and you'll have to guide yourself back to center. Then stay on topic. It gets easier, more comfortable and moving.

Part B: Repurpose Downtime

Downtime happens. It may be in traffic, an elevator or while waiting in line. Give it purpose. More importantly, convert any annoyances into positives. For example, rather than feel annoyed about how slow the check-out person is in your grocery store, use those minutes to take stock of your cart. Be grateful for each item and then do the same as you place each on the conveyor belt. Just be in that moment. Of course, you'll want to finish what you started by mindfully thanking the cashier with eye-contact and a smile.

Part C: Be Intentional

Now let's go a little more out of your way to make gratitude your priority. There are one thousand, four-hundred and forty minutes in every day. Designate five minutes by setting five phone alerts during your waking hours to interrupt one minute each time and without other distractions. Can you feel yourself resisting right now? Really? Well, do it anyway. For each of those minutes, choose one something for which you're grateful to focus on thinking and feeling each one, every time. If something involves a memory, then try to relive it. If something is about something you want to manifest, then imagine everything about actually having it already.

It may help to align your alerts with other plans, such as before or after meals or to occur prior to going or coming back from anywhere. This will help you keep your commitment to yourself by making it least disruptive among other daily priorities.

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ACTIVITY 2 – WATCH YOUR WORDS (ONGOING)

Words matter. Sometimes we've even acquired bad habits without even being aware.

Part A: Catch Yourself

Heighten your attention about the words you use. Are they negative or positive? Try to catch yourself when you use negative terms and convert them. Rather than be someone who hedges by saying, "I don't disagree with you," it's noticeably better to simply say, "I agree with you." The person to whom you say that will surely agree. We often do not hear ourselves. This activity entails active listening.

Part B: Gratitude Converter – from "have" to "get"

The key to harnessing gratitude is to create habits and, with it, turn everyday experiences into enriching ones. A simple exercise is to replace the obligatory word "have" with the thankful word "get." More specifically, replace "Today, I *have* to _____," with "Today, I *get* to _____." Think of it as a Gratitude Converter. Apply this to your last three routine errands, be that to the food store, stopping by the cleaners or going to a doctor appointment. Then try it with your next three errands. Keep at it.

ACTIVITY 3 – ADAPTABILITY (AS OCCURRING)

You've taken a step in the right direction with the grocery clerk. Now be ready to adapt to unexpected setbacks by turning them into opportunities. This is case-by-case and you'll know when it happens. However, let's suppose you go to the pharmacy to pick-up an order that you expected to be ready, but isn't. Rather than allow your blood pressure to spike while waiting, you make better use of that time to shop and stock up on some items you know you need. Now you've used that as an opportunity to save you time another time. When this happens, be extra grateful and proud of yourself. Didn't that feel good? Way to go!

ACTIVITY 4 – ABUNDANCE (TIME: 10 MINUTES)

Page through a department store circular or go online and identify all the things you *want* versus those you really *need*. Chances are that there are very few to none of the latter, which is to say you have already achieved a level of abundance. Your "cup runneth over." That's a solid reason to mindfully experience gratitude. Do that.

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ACTIVITY 5 – HAPPY PLACE (TIME: 5 MINUTES)

Another example, which may sound odd to some, is to go to – what some might call - your Happy Place and take a detailed tour. If you've yet to know where that is, it's usually easy to think of somewhere from your past or a current favorite destination, be that a certain beach or mountain. It will be somewhere that inspires and/or has influenced you. That might be a childhood home or summer camp. Recall every detail possible in your memories. Re-explore it as if actually there. Enjoy! This is a good mindfulness exercise.

ACTIVITY 6 – HONOR THOSE BEFORE YOU (TIME: 5 MINUTES)

One of the more challenging, yet powerful gratitude experiences is to spend it focused on a lost loved one. The grieving process has no short-cuts, so this must regard someone for whom you've released that pain. Now you are ready to honor them by appreciating how much they remain a part of you. Whether it's by viewing photo albums, watching home movies or recalling treasured memories, the goal is to remain singularly purposeful about your gratitude for this person being part of your life. If you've never done this, it may surprise you how good it feels to be able to revisit someone and be able to feel something positive instead.

ACTIVITY 7 – MANIFESTATION (TIME: 10-15 MINUTES)

Manifestation involves taking gratitude to another level by pinpointing future desires and consciously attracting them into the present by experiencing them as if you already have them. This may be why Einstein emphasized imagination. Consider some of the things you'd like to manifest in your life, be that relationships, financial abundance, more energy, freedom or other things that honor your values.

If you are among those who have practiced meditation, yoga or a martial art that underscores the importance of quieting the mind, then you've gained an advantage. Be very clear about what you desire. Focus on it singularly. Give it all your positive energy. Visualize and raise your vibration about it. Feel good! Expect it. Allow it. Imagine that you already have and experience it. Breathe intentionally. Be grateful. When necessary, take inspired action.

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ACTIVITY 8 – CHOOSE GRATITUDE (ONGOING)

By now you're getting the sense that gratitude has few bounds and with good reason. Again, if there's any single overarching sentiment among all the top gurus for personal development, it's that: Gratitude Works.

Ultimately, only you know what brings you joy. And only you can make the conscious effort to slow down to be in any given moment to experience it. Hopefully, you'll discover and create some ways you find worthwhile to fold gratitude into your days.

If it turns out that the only activity you end up sustaining is to convert just those two minutes in your mornings and evenings to mindfully experience gratitude while mindlessly brushing your teeth, you just may find your life will change for the better in less than 30 days. Of course, it also helps to expect that to happen.

In the meantime, in addition to your Gratitude Inventory, here are some other gratitude-laden actions that are free to add to your daily menu of life-enriching experiences.

PERSONAL	OTHERS
● Smile More	● Romance your spouse/partner more
● Notice more (nature's beauty)	● Spend more quality time with family/kids
● Keep a daily Gratitude Journal	● Make gratitude part of family life (mealtime)
● Revisit and expand your gratitude lists	● Call your parents more
● Designate a certain time of day to practice	● Say thank you while making eye contact
● Choose one day per week to not complain	● Compliment others when sincere
● Watch and do more of what inspires you	● Nurture friendships more
● Find 1+ silver lining in every challenge	● Tell others you love and appreciate them
● Cook/eat meals and stay in the moment	● Write personal thank notes
● Post inspiring quotes/images around you	● Post on social media to sing other's praises
● Avoid and minimize what inflicts negativity	● Volunteer to serve and connect with others
● Hold a meaningful object and experience it	● Seek out and enjoy random acts of kindness
● Listen to a favorite song and sing along	● Make sure you only speak well of others

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