

3.3 Gratitude

Cultivate an appreciation for things in your life.

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Recognizing and acknowledging people, events, and material things for which you're grateful can alleviate feelings of sadness, depression, and anxiety and bring positive feelings into your life. Intentionally practicing gratitude is a method of focusing on the good in life and can make you feel natural gratitude even when you're not practicing. Most of us have a negativity bias, and gratitude is effective in alleviating that.

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- Helps you find the positive in challenging situations.
- Creates a feedback loop of positivity.
- Enriches and bolsters your relationships.

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- Cultivating gratitude can be difficult, particularly when you need it the most (e.g., when you're depressed or anxious).
- In an attempt to exercise gratitude, you might end up faking it, which can be counterproductive.

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Practicing gratitude entails seeking and considering various things in your life for which you are grateful. These can be things like the people in your life and the good they bring you or your job, whether it's one that you enjoy or one that simply puts food on the table. You can be grateful for your family (however annoying they might be), for the sun's warm light, or even for the earth beneath your feet. The things you're grateful for don't need to be perfect—the key is to consider your life and find the goodness within it.

In the beginning, you'll probably practice being grateful for the good things in your life. That's often challenging enough! At more advanced levels, you can try being grateful for the difficult situations—in other words, finding the silver lining in every cloud. This skill can seem impossible, but if mastered, it can bring a surreal level of tranquility.

Practicing gratitude intentionally on a daily basis (e.g., as a nightly ritual) can profoundly improve your life. Some ways to practice gratitude include:

- Gratitude journals: At the end of each day or week, before you go to bed, write down three or more things for which you are thankful.
- Gratitude meditation: Sit in meditation and intentionally think about people, things, and events that you appreciate. Take the time to feel your gratification for them in your body. You might want to listen to one of the numerous guided gratitude meditations available online.
- Gratitude partners: Begin a practice where each day, you text your partner, sharing a few things that happened that you appreciate.

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1. Kurzgesagt on Gratitude: <https://youtube.com/watch?v=WPPPFqsECz0>.
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