



**THE 7-DAY
GRATITUDE
CHALLENGE
THAT CAN CHANGE
YOUR LIFE**

Introduction

“Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend” - Buddha

Gratitude is not a feeling that we give a lot of importance to. We experience it occasionally but it's not something we really stop and reflect upon. Perhaps that's why so many people today are so discontented and dissatisfied with their jobs, their relationships, and their lives.

In today's consumer-driven and super-competitive world, our more prevalent emotions tend to be anger, frustration, envy and often, despair. Even people with wealth and successful careers feel this way. Why do we feel that something is missing in our lives? The likely answer is that we lack gratitude.

Gratitude is one of the most overlooked factors in our pursuit of self-improvement and personal well-being.

Although not an external skill that can be learned, gratitude is an innate quality, a potential mindset that exists in each and every one of us. It can be awakened and developed to dramatically change your outlook - and transform your life in ways you never imagined.

Practicing gratitude creates a huge paradigm shift. Suddenly, so many of the things that keep you tossing and turning at night become trivial and meaningless – while the things you should be putting your effort into, the things that have true value and meaning, become crystal-clear. No physical skill can ever transform your life in this way.

This is not a bogus theory. A wealth of research has proven that the regular practice of gratitude helps achieve lasting happiness and success.

So, how do we "practice" something as elusive and intangible as gratitude? Actually, it's one of the easiest things to do. This 7-Day Challenge will show you how to practice a different form of gratitude every day for one week. It will help rewire your brain and sow the seeds for a lasting mindset that becomes second nature. Try it yourself and at the end of the seven days you will never view your life – and the world around you - in the same way again!

Chapter 1: What Science Tells Us About Gratitude

Gratitude is one of the most researched concepts in psychology and behavioral science. Not only has it been proven to improve happiness and strengthen social and personal relationships, but it has also been proven to boost success and productivity, as well as promote overall physical and mental health. Here are some surprising facts that science can tell us:

1. Most people don't express gratitude at their workplace.
2. Women are more grateful than men.
3. Grateful people exercise more and are more health-conscious.
4. Gratitude improves sleep.
5. Gratitude lowers cholesterol levels.
6. Grateful people are more likely to achieve their goals.
7. Gratitude strengthens personal relationships.
8. Gratitude alleviates depression.
9. Gratitude helps people make wiser buying decisions and not overspend.
10. Gratitude strengthens inner peace.

With all these proven benefits, it's no wonder that many wellness experts are recommending that their clients practice gratitude regularly. In addition, many psychiatrists are now incorporating gratitude practices and exercises into their therapies.

The bottom line: Gratitude is likely one of the few things in life that has no downsides. Scientifically, there can be no doubt that gratitude is good for us on many levels!

Chapter 2: Getting Started

The 7-Day Gratitude Challenge requires no special preparations or costs. All you need to get started are two key things:

Keep A Gratitude Journal

The challenge needs to go hand in hand with a gratitude journal where you record your experiences at the end of each day. Ideally, you should keep a physical journal where you record entries in handwriting as this will better imprint the experiences in your mind.

Each night before you go to bed, take a few minutes to jot down how that day's challenge went, any particular things you noticed and how you feel. You must do this each day for the first seven days and the next seven days if you decided to repeat the challenge for another week. As you get the hang of it, it's sufficient to make entries into your journal twice or three times a week after that.

There's an added bonus as well. Research has linked gratitude journaling with lower stress levels, improved mental clarity and better sleep. This should be enough motivation to keep your journal entries top of mind at the end of each day!



Consistency Is Key

When you make the intention to take the 7-Day Challenge, you must make the commitment to follow through consistently. The first week is especially important because you are preparing your brain to rewire itself for gratitude. If you skip days or go through

the challenges half-heartedly, your brain will register that gratitude is not important enough for you to make it a habit. However, this may not be easy for everyone.

Perhaps the one downside to practicing gratitude is that it won't be easy for people who are generally pessimistic and negative in their thinking.

We are all programmed to think negatively more than we do positively, as it is an innate survival instinct from the days when our ancestors had to expect the worst in order to stay alive. However, this can definitely be overcome with consistency and practice,

The bottom line: In order to change, the brain needs to experience gratitude regularly. That's why it's important to follow the challenge through the full seven days and keep gratitude top of mind.

Gratitude builds on itself. The more we experience gratitude, the more the brain changes to make it a mindset. Keeping a gratitude journal and staying consistent will allow you to achieve this by creating a continuous cycle of gratitude in your life.

Chapter 3: The 7-Day Challenge

Day 1: Count Your Blessings

On your first day, from the moment you wake up until you go to bed, make the intent to notice all the things you are grateful for.

There are so many things that we take for granted without giving them a second thought. The challenge is to look around you and notice these things or people and how they make your life easier or happier. Just keep your mind open and be grateful for as many things as you can.

Examples:

- Start your day by being grateful for the running water in your home as you shower, the invigorating smell of your morning coffee and the fact that you are alive to enjoy a new day.
- Find opportunities for gratefulness throughout your day, such as friendly salespeople and helpful colleagues and other people you encounter.

- Find things to be grateful for in your surroundings; the nice view outside your office window, your comfortable chair, and perhaps even your computer and cell phone, which make your life so much easier.

At the end of the day, record in your journal three things that you were most grateful for during your day, why they make you feel that way and your reflections on them.

That's all you have to do for day 1. Now, on to day 2!

Day 2: Make Someone's Day

Your mission for day 2 is to look for opportunities to help others and experience the wonderful sense of selflessness that comes from showing kindness. Being kind to others expands your heart to gratitude because it just makes you feel so good! Here are some examples:

- Send an email or a text message to a friend or colleague thanking them for something they've done – or for simply being in your life.

- Smile at sales attendants and cashiers in shops and thank them for their service.
- Compliment a coworker or friend on something they're wearing.
- Help someone carrying heavy bags to their car or assist an elderly person across the street.
- Send flowers to your partner
- Thank a coworker for their help and support on a project or task.

People don't usually expect appreciation out of the blue so when they receive it, you can be certain it will make their day – and it will make you feel great.

Note: The key here is to be sincere rather than throwing out false compliments for the sake of flattery. Engage with people from a real sense of appreciation and empathy because they add value to your life.

At the end of the day, record in your journal how you went out of your way to make others happy and how it makes you feel.

Day 3: Mindful Positivity

On day 3, you will be on the lookout for negative things that you encounter throughout your day. These could be situations, people or things. Your goal is to find something positive in the negative, such as a lesson, takeaway, or a positive trait that offsets the negative one. Here are some examples:

Negative situation: You're caught in a traffic jam on the way home due to an accident on the road. You're going to be at least two hours late because traffic is at a complete standstill. You think of all the things you have to do at home, your family waiting anxiously, that report you have to write for your boss... it's a total bummer. What positive thing could you possibly be grateful for in that situation?

Well, for starters, that you're not in that accident, injured or God forbid, even dead. At the very least, your car would be totaled. Be grateful that you are safe and that your loved ones are safe and say a prayer for those less fortunate people in the accident.

That should be enough to keep you patient until you make it home. Spend the time listening to podcasts or even playing games on your phone. It's not the end of the world.

Negative people: We all know that type of person who is always so cynical and critical; the constant moaner and complainer who always finds fault with everything. Being around people like that can be extremely draining and frustrating.

How do you see anything positive in that type of person? Everyone, no matter how horrible they may seem, has some positive traits. They may be an animal lover. It may be that they express their criticism with a dry sense of humor that makes you smile despite yourself. It may be that they are brutally honest, in their own way.

Negative people usually have a reason for being that way. They could be scared or angry due to a past negative experience. Seeing them in this light helps you empathize with them and be more understanding.

Negative things: Your boiler breaks down in the middle of winter and the inconvenience and cost of getting it fixed have thrown your budget and schedule off track. However, you can look at the positive side and be grateful that you even have a boiler when so many people in the world still live without heat and running water. Be grateful that the money spent did not go towards medical costs for you or a loved one being ill or

hospitalized. When you look at the bigger picture in this way, you will be grateful it was not worse.

This challenge will really make you think deeply about many things and help you realize that indeed, every cloud does have a silver lining. Record your reflections in your gratitude journal.

Day 4: Affirmations

Affirmations are positive statements that you repeat to yourself in order to condition your brain to believe them. Because they work to rewire your brain on a subconscious level, they are very powerful tools for making gratitude a lasting mindset.

All you have to do is choose two or three affirmations that resonate with you and repeat them to yourself throughout the day. There are two things to note here:

- Affirmations must be said with conviction.
- Affirmations must be in the present tense and never in the past tense.

Here are some examples:

- I am so grateful for everything I have in my life.
- I accept and appreciate all that comes to me in my life.
- My life is filled with abundance and I am grateful for that.
- I am grateful for my health and the health of my loved ones.
- I am grateful for my loved ones and friends who encourage and support me.

You can choose two or three affirmations from the examples above. Google more by searching for "gratitude affirmations" or even write your own. Keep them posted where you can see them and repeat them throughout the day.

Day 5: Negative Visualization

This is a very counterintuitive approach that is designed to "shock" you into gratitude. It was invented by the ancient Stoic philosophers who believed that all worldly desires and material possessions were a vice and that one must live only to cultivate inner virtue.

Negative visualization works by forcing your mind to imagine a worst-case scenario and in doing so, you immediately realize all that you have to be grateful for. Sit down, close your eyes and force yourself to imagine one of the following:

Losing everything. A terrible hurricane or flood hits your town and destroys everything; your home, car and all of your possessions. You are left with nothing but the clothes on your back. Visualize the terrible scene, and how everything you worked so hard for is gone. Enough said.

Death or illness of a loved one: Death and illness are facts of life. When you visualize the death or serious illness of a loved one, you will immediately realize that nothing – absolutely nothing – would matter compared to that. Be grateful that your children and family are happy and healthy. You will realize that having your loved ones in your life is all you need to be happy.

Contemplate your own mortality. Nobody likes to reflect on their own death and yet, we're all going to die someday. Reflect on your own mortality and how precious life is. We don't know how long we will be in the world. What matters is that we enjoy every moment. Be grateful for every new day and never take anything for granted.

Many people find this exercise extremely uncomfortable and with good reason. But when you practice negative visualization, you should experience a dramatic shift in your perspective. Not having all you want and having a less than perfect life is nothing

compared to losing all you have, losing a loved one or losing your own life.

Day 6: Become A Minimalist For A Day

A minimalist is someone who learns to live and function with only the bare essentials... Modern-day minimalists report that living with less has made them happier and more content. They are able to focus on what really matters rather than on material possessions and escape the endless cycle of materialism.

On day 6, your challenge is to live like a minimalist from the moment you get up. Simplify everything you do down to the bare minimum. This means eating simply, dressing simply, avoiding the use of time-wasting gadgets and TV and focusing on the simple things in life. Here are some suggestions:

- Cycle or walk to work if you can.
- Dress simply and modestly and don't spend too much time on makeup or a complicated beauty routine.
- Don't shop for food. Make do with whatever you have in your cupboards. Even if it's just a can of beans, find a creative way to cook and serve them. Don't forget to be grateful for your simple meal.

- Don't watch TV, play video games or go on social media. Instead, take a nature walk or spend time playing a simple board game with your family.
- Any time you catch yourself wanting something, think of all the things you have and let gratitude fill your heart. You have more than enough already and your life is filled with abundance.

This challenge is designed to make you appreciate all the blessings in your life that you take for granted. More importantly, it helps you see that if you were to lose almost everything tomorrow, you could still live very well with much less!

Day 7: Mindful Observation

This challenge involves observing people that you encounter and finding a trait or quality in them that you admire. Here are a few examples:

You are at a crowded bistro for lunch and the waitress, dealing with dozens of demanding customers, remains efficient, polite and professional. She serves you with a smile and even

remembers your name. Record your appreciation and admiration for her professionalism and patience.

Notice a mother playing with her child in the park and admire her patience and loving care of her child.

Notice the positive traits of your colleagues at work, such as working well under pressure, forbearance with a difficult supervisor or angry customer, or their willingness to run errands and help others.

Notice the wonderful traits of your own family members and tell yourself how lucky you are to have them in your life, even though you do have your ups and downs.

Chapter 4: What to Expect

Once you have finished the 7-Day Challenge, you will notice a shift in your perspective and be more aware of how to view and deal with the world more positively.

However, the 7-Day Challenge doesn't stop after one week. Repeat the challenge week after week until the various approaches become a lasting mindset. Remember, the more you practice gratitude, the more it builds on itself and the more your life will change. Here are some of the things you can expect:

The quality of your life will improve. Focusing on the good things in your life will make you more content and less likely to stress out over what you now realize are trivial things. Your mood will improve and you will have more optimism. You will begin to develop a quiet calm and inner happiness that will reflect on everything you do.

You will more easily overcome adversity. Seeing the big picture and understand what matters most to you will help you

overcome hurdles and obstacles faster. Gratitude gives you the insight and motivation to move forward rather than dwell on setbacks because you still have so much to be grateful for.

Life around you will improve. Gratitude is contagious. Thanking others and showing your appreciation makes them feel good. You will be surrounded by happy and supportive people who go out of their way to show you their appreciation in return. They will be grateful to have you in their life!

Your initial gratitude will be like a catalyst that spreads to your immediate circle and beyond. In your own little way, you're making the world a better place!

Gratitude reduces materialism. Materialism is highly detrimental to gratitude. There's nothing wrong with wanting to live well but our modern culture has conditioned us to never be content with what we have, even if we are already living very well. Gratitude helps us put less importance on wealth and material things, thus decreasing negative feelings of dissatisfaction and incompetence.

You will strengthen personal relationships and build a strong social circle. When you express gratefulness and appreciation for the people in your life, they will want to be

around you – it's as simple as that. Expressing your appreciation to your spouse and children will strengthen family bonds as well.

Gratitude reduces feelings of envy. Envy in moderation can be a great incentive to work harder and get ahead. But excessive envy and jealousy of what others have can be emotionally damaging. The more you practice gratitude, the more accepting you will become of who you are and what you have, and this is tremendously liberating.

You will get ahead in your career. Gratitude in the workplace helps you build better connections and trust with others. This will open many doors for advancement in your career. When you are grateful for having a job, you will also become more efficient and productive at what you do.

You will be healthier. Since our mind and body are interconnected, it's a given that gratitude can help improve your physical health. For one thing, you may become more health-conscious because you want to be around for a long time to enjoy all your blessings. In addition to this, you will have more energy and vitality and be less likely to suffer from stress-related illnesses.

The Bottom line: These are just some of the changes you can expect when you practice gratitude - and they will truly be life-changing for you and for those around you.

Chapter 5: Basic Gratitude Tips

To stay motivated, consistent and be able to avoid procrastination, here are a few helpful tips to ease you into your daily practice of gratitude:

1. Start each day with a scheduled alert to remind you what the day's challenge will be and what you are supposed to do.
2. Schedule another one or two alerts during the day as a reminder to check in with yourself and make sure you're on the right track.
3. On the third or fourth day, block off 30 minutes to an hour to give yourself a special treat as a reward for having made it through the challenge so far. This will register to your brain that gratitude is something that you celebrate and value, helping your brain embrace it faster.
4. Keep affirmations posted where you can see them, such as on your fridge, taped onto your bathroom mirror or on your computer desktop.

5. Join a community of likeminded people. Make great use of social media by finding and joining a gratitude community and engaging with likeminded people. It's a great way to share experiences, enjoy some great support and maybe even make some great friends.
6. Try guided meditation. A quick YouTube search for "Guided Gratitude Meditation" will give you access to a range of meditations of various lengths. Just put on some headphones, get comfortable and let yourself go! These meditations are a great way to unwind and practice gratitude at the same time.
7. Pray. If you are religious, prayer is one of the best ways to express your gratitude to God for all the blessings He has given you.
8. Reconnect with nature. Communing with nature is one of the best ways to stay uplifted and grateful. Take long walks, plan picnics, go hiking or cycling, or sit in your back yard and stargaze. No matter where you live, there should be opportunities for getting outside and enjoying nature and the more you do so, the better.

9. Avoid gossiping and complaining. As you begin to adopt gratitude as a mindset, this will become much easier. You will naturally gravitate towards all that is positive – and avoid wasting time talking about others or complaining. If you do tend to do these things, catch yourself doing them throughout the day and stop yourself. You should begin to notice a pattern and learn to avoid the things that trigger it.

10. Stay minded and grounded in the present. Ruminating about the past is useless because that won't change it. Overthinking and worrying about the future is just as useless because you can't control what happens. Your best bet is to live in the present and gratefully enjoy what you have. Mindfulness and gratitude go hand in hand and each strengthens the other. You may want to consider mindfulness exercises or meditation to train yourself to be more present at all times.

The bottom line: The most important thing through all this is to get excited about the changes happening inside you and how your life is slowly being transformed. Enjoy the amazing transformation, get creative and look for new ways to help you practice gratitude every day.

Conclusion

Gratitude is the feeling of thankfulness that creates magic in your brain. The 7-Day Challenge is your first step towards learning how to embrace and practice gratitude in your life.

Practice the challenge week after week for as long as you need to until gratitude becomes a part of everything you do. You can also choose to practice one form of gratitude (such as minimalism or mindful appreciation) if you find that it impacts your mood and behavior more than the others. The idea is to form a new habit, so whatever works best for you will be the easiest way to do that.

Even in the worst of times, we still have things that we can be grateful for. Let that be your motto on your journey to a happier, more fulfilling life.