



My Gratitude Journal

Life Cycles in Balance

*Guiding you on the path to creating fertile
ground for your baby's first home and
empowering women . . .one birth at a time*

How to Use Your Gratitude Journal

Have it Handy

Let it Be Easy – keep entries short and sweet

Be Consistent – pick a time of day to note moments or items of gratitude

Review Often – Look over your gratitude journal occasionally for a boost of good feeling!

Make it Yours – Personalize your gratitude journal with photos, quotes and other items that make you feel grateful!

Gratitude: Let's Make It the first Thing we Remember

I'm sure you know that heart-centered feelings, like gratitude and appreciation, can bring about beneficial physiologic changes in your body in a very short amount of time. But did you know that practicing gratitude and appreciation can make you healthier, smarter, and more energetic?

After years of studying gratitude, Robert A. Emmons, professor of psychology at the University of California, Davis, found that people who practiced gratitude daily (for example writing in a gratitude journal) reported higher levels of alertness, enthusiasm, determination, attentiveness, and energy than those who didn't.

I remember years ago, my father said to me, "Gratitude is the first thing forgotten." I've witnessed this many times in my own life—even in so-called spiritual individuals. With the stress and intensity of today's world, it's easy to forget to say thank you. Because we are all connected, this has much farther-reaching implications than you might realize.

Imagine if 1,000 normally negative or critical people practiced gratitude and human-kindness for just one day. The ripple effect could touch hundreds of thousands of people—and literally uplift countless individuals.

So here are three easy ways to practice gratitude every day:

1. Create Gratitude Touchstones.

Write your favorite memories or peak experiences on index cards and keep them close at hand as gratitude touchstones. Here are a few examples: your spouse, your sleeping child, a beautiful place in nature, a favorite pet, an exciting trip, a special moment with a friend.

2. Make a list of all the people in your life for whom you are grateful.

Who helped or supported you in 2013? Start with the easy ones, like family, friends, work colleagues, wait staff at your favorite restaurant, and close advisors. Let the list expand organically.

As you begin to picture the more minor players in your life, like the person on the end of the customer support hotline or the random person who smiled at you while you were at your favorite coffee stop, you may be amazed by how much help and support you have in your life.

Note: You can do the same exercise for the things you are grateful for. Don't forget things that are easy to take for granted like heat, electricity, and clean water.

3. Appreciate yourself for all that you are and all that you do.

Take a moment right now to look back and acknowledge how far you've come since last year. (You can do this for shorter intervals, too.) Journaling is a great way to keep track of this kind of information. The point is to update your “self-appreciation circuits” regularly and genuinely. It's easier to go negative! Don't do that to yourself.

Right now, take yourself into your heart and acknowledge your good traits, what you've accomplished this year, and the positive ways that you've grown. Recognize the ways in which your presence on planet Earth actually helps and supports others.

Practicing gratitude for as little as 15–20 seconds, can lower stress hormones, increase the flow of oxygen to every cell of your body, and harmonize your heart's rhythms with your body's other systems.

If all of this happens when you focus for just 15–20 seconds on something that brings you pleasure, joy, or a feeling of gratitude, imagine what would happen to your health—and our world—if you were able to cultivate and express gratitude and appreciation on a regular basis. That's pretty powerful stuff.

How Gratitude Makes Us Happy

Check out the three kinds of gratitude

BY ROBERT HOLDEN, PH.D.

Practicing unconditional gratitude for your life helps you to hold a space for blessings in every situation.

How Gratitude Makes Us Happy

Check out the three kinds of gratitude

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What's the connection between gratitude and happiness? Heartfelt gratitude really is the fastest way to experience happiness now. It is impossible to be truly grateful and neurotic; it is also impossible to be truly grateful and not happy. In my experience, everyone is familiar with gratitude, but they are often unaware of what it can do for you, if you really practice it. My own inquiry into gratitude has shown me that there are three different types of gratitude. The first type is a basic positive attitude; the second type is a philosophy about life; and the third type is a training in vision.

Type #1: An Attitude

Most people's experience of gratitude is a positive response to events that are judged as favorable. Gratitude is a conscious reaction to things, people, situations, and outcomes that you deem to be "good" and "positive." This type of gratitude is very personal and highly interpretative. For example, I might be grateful that my football team beat yours, but you probably don't feel that way right now. If you're really spiritual, you may congratulate me on my team's good fortune, but you probably don't feel grateful about the outcome.

This attitude of gratitude is mostly reactive, that is, it exists because something happens first. Like the type of happiness called "pleasure," it is an effect of a cause, a response to a stimulus. There is, however, also such a thing as a proactive attitude of gratitude. Proactive gratitude is based on a decision to enjoy something before it happens. For example, *I intend to appreciate and give thanks for today, no matter what happens*. Proactive gratitude uses the power of intention to help you make the most of your day. *It is good to end the day with gratitude, but it is even better to begin the day with gratitude.*

Type #2: A Philosophy

This is an "unconditional gratitude" based on a faith that *everything that happens (or doesn't happen) in your life is for your own best interests*. It starts with the awareness that we live in a purposeful universe in which everything that happens can be used as a hint and a valuable spur for greater happiness and enlightenment. No matter what an event looks like, and no matter whether you judge it as "good" or "bad," "right" or "wrong," "success" or "failure," it carries a gift of great value. This awareness of "a gift in everything" dawns slowly at first and grows eventually into an absolute faith.

This philosophy of gratitude proclaims, "Life is on my side." Life is always for you; it is never against you. Practicing unconditional gratitude for your life helps you to hold a space in your mind for the possibility of blessings in every situation. It is a fact that blessings sometimes come wrapped in fear, pain, and tears. In choosing to practice unconditional gratitude you are choosing to trust the process, to honor your feelings every step of the way, and to place your faith in an outcome of *inevitable grace*.

Type #3: A Vision

Real Gratitude, with a capital G, stems from a holy revelation that *you are what you seek*. It is more than just an attitude or a philosophy, because it gives you a glimpse of the light that is your original, divine nature. This type of gratitude is based on a deep spiritual realization that you were created perfectly, and that everything you have chased after and longed for—love, happiness, peace—is already yours. It is, therefore, a type of salvation, a homecoming, and a chance to finally rest.

This real Gratitude is based on a thanksgiving for your true identity. It teaches you that *happiness does not leave its source*. In other words, happiness does not come and go; what comes and goes is your awareness of happiness. It also teaches you that *what is truly valuable already belongs to you*. For instance, your true nature has an ever-ready capacity to love unconditionally, to be unreasonably happy, and to be truly wise. You can enjoy these things now, because of who you are, and because of what created you.

Excerpted with permission from Be Happy: Release the Power of Happiness in YOU, by Robert Holden, Ph.D. (Hay House, 2009).

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