

Gratitude Journal

Gratitude is a powerful concept that has been shown to improve the mental and physical aspects in our life. Simply put, gratitude is when we show appreciation for the positives that are present within our day-to-day life (Alkozei, Smith, & Killgore 2018). Remembering events, times, and experiences in which friends, family, or even strangers have shown us kindness – e.g., done us favours, or treated us with empathy, etc. – can significantly benefit our wellbeing and improve our relationships (Tsang, 2019).

Research indicates that expressing gratitude verbally to those who have provided us with kindness and favours can further benefit our own wellbeing and the wellbeing of the person who has provided us with helpful favours. However, simply writing down the act and not expressing it verbally is also beneficial to our happiness and overall sense of wellbeing.

If this is the first time you have tried expressive writing, feel free to review our “Expressive Writing” worksheet found at <https://torontoconcussion.ca/patient-resources/#1569512662607-f2e52496-8931> (in the “Mental Performance” tab).

Instructions

1. Keep a pen and notebook somewhere that is easily accessible to you in case you would like to jot down things for which you are grateful as they occur to you. Otherwise, write at a convenient time for you.

2. Choosing a consistent time to write in your journal will increase the likelihood that you will stick with the practice.
3. Write down a few things for which you felt grateful today, in as much detail as you can. If you can only think of one thing, that is okay, as your reflections may vary from day-to-day. Some days you may have more to write than others; this is okay.
4. Try to be honest and introspective, and remember, this is an exploration, not a competition. Take your time, go slowly, and be truthful to yourself. What do you notice about gratitude in your life, and its effect? Keep journaling for at least five weeks once each day. After doing so complete the reflection questions located below.

Consider these thought-starters to help guide your writing

- Can you remember a time in which you felt gratitude towards another person (even if you didn't express it to them)? And towards yourself? What about your country?
 - How did you feel?
 - What was different about what you could do with this feeling?
 - What did you notice about how you thought? Behaved? Physically felt?
- Was there anything today for which you were grateful?
- Did you see or hear anything that made you more grateful for what you have?

- Is there anything that you may be overlooking (i.e., that you take for granted) that you would like to consciously acknowledge with gratitude?

Reflection

After completing the journal, spend some time reflecting on the impacts it may have had on your life. You can use these questions to guide your reflection, but do not feel limited to them.

1. Did acknowledging gratitude towards another person help me to improve my thoughts towards them? My feelings for them? My behaviour towards them?
2. Was I able to express gratitude for things I did? Or things I have? How did that change the way I felt? The way I thought about myself or my life? The way I behaved?
3. From keeping this journal, did it become more automatic to notice more things in my life for which to be grateful?
4. Have there been any differences in my responses from the start of the practice until now?
5. Did I notice any difference in how those close to me felt, thought or behaved (whether they were aware of my gratitude practice or not)? If so, what difference did their change have on me?

References

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