

happier  
human



# **The Gratitude Workbook**

**by Amit Amin**

# Introduction

The benefits of gratitude are huge. If you're not sure what I'm talking about, I recommend skimming this first: [the 32 benefits of gratitude you didn't know about: how gratitude can change your life.](#)

Luckily for us, we're not the first generation to become aware of the benefits of gratitude.

We have both techniques a thousand years old and techniques born of modern science.

There are techniques for atheists and techniques for devout Christians; techniques that have been proven effective on grumpy old men with chronic pain and techniques that have been proven effective on healthy college students. Whatever your life situation, there is a gratitude exercise for you.

You are one step away from adding one small habit that can have many large impacts on your life.

# How To Use This Book

There are 9 gratitude techniques shared in this eBook. More is better, but all it takes is one successfully implemented technique to permanently increase your happiness set-point.

To get the most out of this book, you should find and select a technique which you can make into a habit - gratitude journal or prayer, the effect is the same - more gratitude. Once you've integrated one, increase your practice length or frequency, or add another technique into the mix.

Included at the end of the eBook are three strategies for making the exercises stick, and two ways for amplifying their power. Now, onto the techniques.

## Disclaimer

The information in this eBook is not medical advice, and should not be treated as such.

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# 1. Gratitude Journal

A gratitude journal is one of the easiest and most effective ways of cultivating gratitude.

Just write down, on a napkin, moleskin journal, or word document, a few items for which you are grateful. Depending on your personality, this could take a bit of extra effort at first.

Daily is more effective than weekly, but weekly is still enough to create significant change.

Five items per session is not necessarily better than three. Taking the time to explore and enjoy the intensity of each feeling of gratitude is important.

At night is better than in the morning, but only because this practice has been shown to significantly improve sleep quality when done before sleeping.

It doesn't have to be written. You can also verbalize the items out-loud or in your mind. Do whatever works for you.

There is only one rule: keep it interesting or it will stop working.

## 2. Negative Visualization

First popularized by the Greek Stoics, negative visualization can be a powerful mental technique.

The technique is simple - pick one area of your life that you would like to better appreciate, it can be health, financial, familial, or work related. Let's go personal - if you have a child please use them for the upcoming example, if not, use someone else close to you.

Now visualize the worst possible thing that could happen to them. In most cases, that means their death. Why think such negative thoughts? I think of each week with my family as a blessing, because once a week I imagine their death. It's much better than taking their lives for granted.

Some additional ideas include: being blinded or crippled, having a heart attack, getting cancer, going broke, losing your house, or being imprisoned.

Sometimes we need to work through some pain to feel the good. The warmth of a hot shower would go unappreciated in a world without cold.

# 3. Grace, For Everything

How often do you say grace? Until recently, I never did - I'm not religious.

Now I say grace at least a few times a day (although technically it may not be grace, because I'm saying thanks to secular forces like luck rather than to the divine).

And why not? You can choose to be grateful, or you can choose to be self-absorbed. It's a question of perspective. Gratitude is linked to happiness and health, while self-absorption with unhappiness and mental decline. It's your choice.

For example, if you are successful but were abused as a child, you can adopt a mindset of, "I'm successful in spite of my past," or "because of my parents and lady luck/God, I exist in this world." The second approach is much harder, but also feels much better.

Or with food, "I paid for this with my money, I have no one to thank but my hard work," or "thank lady luck/God for providing the soil, water, and sunshine which grew my food, thank the farmer for harvesting it, the truck driver for transporting it, the cook for inventing the recipe, and so on."

## 4. Pray

In religion: east, west, north, or south there exist prayers of gratitude.

If you needed more motivation to say those prayers than, "you're supposed to," or "it will bring you closer to god," now you have it.

Prayer is an extremely effective technique for cultivating gratitude, because it mercilessly strikes away many of gratitude's common shackles:

- I have no one to be grateful towards.
- I have nothing to be grateful for.
- Gratitude is for the weak.
- I'm not sure how to start or what to say.

Thich Nhat Hanh, one of the most revered Buddhists in the world, offers a simple prayer for all faiths:

Waking up this morning, I see the blue sky.  
I join my hands in thanks  
for the many wonders of life;  
for having twenty-four brand-new hours before me.



# 5. Remember The Bad

Remember the bad is a different version of negative visualization.

Rather than visualizing something bad that could happen, visualize something bad that actually did happen, but that you overcame.

Remembering the pain and difficulty with which we arrived at the present helps us to feel grateful. Our life didn't just happen - we fought, sweat, and maybe bled for it.

The key is not to focus on unresolved bad - choices not made and regrets left festering, but challenges conquered and positives that could have been negative.

What better way to appreciate our current spouse, job, or living situation than to remember some of the terrible, terrible relationships, jobs, and cockroaches we've had to deal with and overcome in the past?

We're often told to focus on the present. In this one situation, I believe that is wrong. It is better to appreciate those challenges that define us, than to take the present moment for granted.

# 6. Gratitude Visualization

Notice a theme of visualization? That's because visualization is a powerful method of evoking strong emotion and gratitude, and the stronger the gratitude, the bigger the benefits. This time, the imagery will be positive.

First, picture in your mind someone for whom you are grateful. Now verbalize, out loud or in your mind, a few specific reasons for why you are grateful to them. The more specific the better. After a few minutes, switch to someone else.

I set aside 20 minutes each Sunday to work through this practice.

You can also focus this practice on just one person, and use it as a way to deeply increase your appreciation of your spouse or other important person.

Ingratitude kills marriages. Perhaps gratitude can save on.

# 7. Sensory Appreciation

You are your five senses plus a brain: sound, sight, smell, taste, touch, and a dash of intelligence and awareness.

But how aware are we really? We consciously perceive less than .01% of the millions of sensory cells being activated each second.

Usually this is a good thing - if we were suddenly aware of all of the different things touching our body, smells reaching our nose, tastes lingering on our tongue, sounds hitting our eardrums and light-rays entering our eyes all at once, we would go crazy and be unable to focus.

But sometimes it's good to turn off the filter. The next time you are eating delicious food, take a moment to close your eyes, focus on the pleasant sensations being generated in your mouth, and be grateful for 1) your tongue, 2) the food, or both.

Or the next time you are listening to a favorite song, close your eyes, focus on the beautiful combination of sounds, and be grateful for 1) your ears, 2) the music, or both.

Whether the source be God or evolution, we humans could have easily been created without the ability to perceive such a wide breadth and beauty of sounds, smells, sights, or tastes.

## 8. Three Questions

If you'd prefer a more structured exercise, this one is for you. Ask yourself and reflect on these 3 questions:

What have I received from \_\_\_\_\_?

What have I given to \_\_\_\_\_?

What troubles & difficulties have I caused \_\_\_\_\_?

You can fill in the blanks with one person, or spread out your time on multiple individuals.

You can do this once at the end of every day or once at the end of each week.

If you find that one question evokes more gratitude than the others, feel free to focus on that one. You can also come up with questions of your own.

This practice was meant as a contemplative exercise, but if you prefer writing or verbalizing, then do that.

If you have trouble answering the questions, you can try going back through your day or week chronologically.

# 9. Cognitive Behavioral Magic

It's not really magic - it takes a lot of effort. But it is powerful.

We are what we think.

What we say to ourselves is what we become.

That is the idea behind cognitive behavioral therapy, one of the most effective treatments for depression.

By noticing, stopping, and replacing negative self talk with positive self talk, one can actually become happier, more confident, and more optimistic.

We can use this strategy to cultivate gratitude, by saying to ourselves, a few times a day, phrases of gratitude, such as:

"I am so grateful."

"I am surrounded by kindness."

"Every day, I am given so many gifts."

Whatever resonates with you - just be sure to make it a habit, or it won't make a difference.

# 10. Motivators

## Make a Vow

Writing down a goal makes you more likely to follow through on it.

Making a public vow makes you even more likely to follow through on it.

You can borrow the power of social influence by making a public vow to be more grateful.

## Find an Accountability Partner

Know the biggest reason a life coach can transform your life? It's because they hold you accountable. But you don't need to pay a life coach to find someone to hold you accountable.

Find someone else who is also trying to achieve a goal, and check up on each others' progress once or twice a week.

It's best to find someone who is also trying to achieve a goal, because it keeps the relationship equal. If only you are being held accountable, it will seem more like the other person is just nagging you.

# Track It

What we track we subconsciously improve. Set a specific goal (e.g. I will write in my gratitude journal every day, I will say a prayer of gratitude 3 times today, etc...) and write down at the end of each day how you did. This method helps keeps you accountable, and has transformed my life.

# 11. Amplifiers

## Mind-Body Loving

There is evidence across multiple mind-body techniques, like mindfulness meditation and progressive muscle relaxation, that they can increase the frequency, intensity, and duration of gratitude.

I can say personally that mindfulness meditation has multiplied the power of my gratitude practices by helping me become aware of, focus on, and intensify my feelings of gratitude.

## Environmental Primers

Did you know that just holding a warm cup of coffee or smiling makes you happier and more friendly?

Subliminal advertising works on the same principle - there are subtle, almost unnoticeable ways in which our subconscious can be influenced.

I have the following quote hung above my desk, "The journey is the end." Although I rarely read it, I see it in passing several times every day. Just seeing the quote subconsciously influences my behavior for the better.

You can use one the gratitude quotes below (in your screen-saver, written down next to your bed, etc...) or find



something else that symbolizes gratitude for you.

"Let us be grateful to people who make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom." - Marcel Proust

"We can only be said to be alive in those moments when our hearts are conscious of our treasures." - Thornton Wilder

"At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us." -Albert Schweitzer

"The deepest craving of human nature is the need to be appreciated.?" -- William James

"Be thankful for what you have; you'll end up having more. If you concentrate on what you don't have, you will never, ever have enough."?-- Oprah Winfrey

"He is a wise man who does not grieve for the things which he has not, but rejoices for those which he has." - Epictetus

"You say grace before meals. All right. But I say grace before the concert and the opera, and grace before the play and pantomime, and grace before I open a book, and grace before sketching, painting, swimming, fencing, boxing, walking, playing, dancing and grace before I dip the pen in the ink." — G. K. Chesterton

"No duty is more urgent than that of returning thanks". — Unknown

“You simply will not be the same person two months from now after consciously giving thanks each day for the abundance that exists in your life. And you will have set in motion an ancient spiritual law: the more you have and are grateful for, the more will be given you.” — Sarah Ban Breathnach

“There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle.” — Albert Einstein

“Gratitude can transform common days into thanksgivings, turn routine jobs into joy, and change ordinary opportunities into blessings.” — William Arthur Ward

“Take full account of the excellencies which you possess, and in gratitude remember how you would hanker after them, if you had them not.” — Marcus Aurelius

“Real life isn’t always going to be perfect or go our way, but the recurring acknowledgement of what is working in our lives can help us not only to survive but surmount our difficulties.” — Sarah Ban Breathnach

“We often take for granted the very things that most deserve our gratitude.” — Cynthia Ozick

“Can you see the holiness in those things you take for granted—a paved road or a washing machine? If you concentrate on finding what is good in every situation, you will discover that your life will suddenly be filled with gratitude, a feeling that nurtures the soul.” — Rabbi Harold Kushner

“We can be thankful to a friend for a few acres or a little money; and yet for the freedom and command of the whole

earth, and for the great benefits of our being, our life, health, and reason, we look upon ourselves as under no obligation.” — Marcus Annaeus Seneca

“When we become more fully aware that our success is due in large measure to the loyalty, helpfulness, and encouragement we have received from others, our desire grows to pass on similar gifts. Gratitude spurs us on to prove ourselves worthy of what others have done for us. The spirit of gratitude is a powerful energizer.” — Wilferd A. Peterson

“Whatever our individual troubles and challenges may be, it’s important to pause every now and then to appreciate all that we have, on every level. We need to literally “count our blessings,” give thanks for them, allow ourselves to enjoy them, and relish the experience of prosperity we already have.” — Shakti Gawain

“Thou that has given so much to me, Give one thing more—a grateful heart; Not thankful when it pleaseth me, As if thy blessings had spare days; But such a heart, whose pulse may be Thy praise.” -George Herbert

“(Some people) have a wonderful capacity to appreciate again and again, freshly and naively, the basic goods of life, with awe, pleasure, wonder, and even ecstasy.” — A.H. Maslow

“If the only prayer you say in your life is thank you, that would suffice.” — Meister Eckhart

“Find the good and praise it.” — Alex Haley

“Give thanks for a little and you will find a lot.” — The Hausa of Nigeria

“What if you gave someone a gift, and they neglected to thank you for it-would you be likely to give them another? Life is the same way. In order to attract more of the blessings that life has to offer, you must truly appreciate what you already have.” — Ralph Marston

“Happiness is itself a kind of gratitude.” — Joseph Wood Krutch

“The moment one gives close attention to anything, even a blade of grass, it becomes a mysterious, awesome, indescribably magnificent world in itself.” — Henry Miller

“There is a calmness to a life lived in gratitude, a quiet joy.” — Ralph H. Blum

“Gratefulness is the key to a happy life that we hold in our hands, because if we are not grateful, then no matter how much we have we will not be happy — because we will always want to have something else or something more.” — Brother David Steindl-Rast

“Happiness cannot be traveled to, owned, earned, worn or consumed. Happiness is the spiritual experience of living every minute with love, grace and gratitude.” — Denis Waitley

“As each day comes to us refreshed and anew, so does my gratitude renew itself daily. The breaking of the sun over the horizon is my grateful heart dawning upon a blessed world. ” — Adabella Radici

“For each new morning with its light, For rest and shelter of the night, For health and food, for love and friends, For everything Thy goodness sends.” – Ralph Waldo Emerson

“Grace isn’t a little prayer you chant before receiving a meal. It’s a way to live.” — Attributed to Jacqueline Winspear

“When eating bamboo sprouts, remember the man who planted them.” — Chinese Proverb

“Only a stomach that rarely feels hungry scorns common things.” — Horace

“But the value of gratitude does not consist solely in getting you more blessings in the future. Without gratitude you cannot long keep from dissatisfied thought regarding things as they are.” — Wallace Wattles

“Blessed are those that can give without remembering and receive without forgetting.” — Author Unknown

“If you concentrate on finding whatever is good in every situation, you will discover that your life will suddenly be filled with gratitude, a feeling that nurtures the soul.” — Rabbi Harold Kushner

“Nothing that is done for you is a matter of course. Everything originates in a will for the good, which is directed at you. Train yourself never to put off the word or action for the expression of gratitude.” — Albert Schweitzer

“God gave you a gift of 86,400 seconds today. Have you used one to say “thank you?” — William A. Ward

“Gratitude is a vaccine, an antitoxin, and an antiseptic.” — John Henry Jowett

“Feeling grateful or appreciative of someone or something in your life actually attracts more of the things that you appreciate and value into your life.” — Christiane Northrup

“The best way to pay for a lovely moment is to enjoy it.” — Richard Bach

“Reflect upon your present blessings, of which every man has plenty; not on your past misfortunes of which all men have some.” — Charles Dickens

“Both abundance and lack exist simultaneously in our lives, as parallel realities. It is always our conscious choice which secret garden we will tend... when we choose not to focus on what is missing from our lives but are grateful for the abundance that’s present — love, health, family, friends, work, the joys of nature and personal pursuits that bring us pleasure — the wasteland of illusion falls away and we experience Heaven on earth.” —Sarah Ban Breathnach

“Whenever we are appreciative, we are filled with a sense of well-being and swept up by the feeling of joy.” — M.J. Ryan

“Gratitude is riches. Complaint is poverty.” —Doris Day

“Many people who order their lives rightly in all other ways are kept in poverty by their lack of gratitude.” — Wallace Wattles

“Let us rise up and be thankful, for if we didn’t learn a lot today, at least we learned a little, and if we didn’t learn a little, at least we didn’t get sick, and if we got sick, at least we didn’t die; so, let us all be thankful.” — Buddha

“Two kinds of gratitude: The sudden kind we feel for what we take; the larger kind we feel for what we give.” — Edwin

## Arlington Robinson

“There is a law of gratitude, and it is . . . the natural principle that action and reaction are always equal and in opposite directions. The grateful outreaching of your mind in thankful praise to supreme intelligence is a liberation or expenditure of force. It cannot fail to reach that to which it is addressed, and the reaction is an instantaneous movement toward you.” — Wally Wattles

“Gratitude should not be just a reaction to getting what you want, but an all-the-time gratitude, the kind where you notice the little things and where you constantly look for the good, even in unpleasant situations. Start bringing gratitude to your experiences, instead of waiting for a positive experience in order to feel grateful.” — Marelisa Fábrega

# Afterword

Best of luck on your gratitude journey. Remember, it is a journey, not a sprint or even a marathon. You may see some change in weeks or months, but a true transformation requires years of effort. I think gratitude, happiness, and life-satisfaction are worth the effort.

If you have any questions, feel free to e-mail me at [amit@happierhuman.com](mailto:amit@happierhuman.com).

Join me in my lifetime journey to replace contentedness with excellence and jubilation at [HappierHuman.com](http://HappierHuman.com).



