



Holiday Gratitude Guide-

CREATE HOLIDAY
MAGIC THAT LASTS
ALL YEAR WITH
GRATITUDE
LEADING THE WAY

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WELCOME

Let me express a warm welcome to you! I cannot tell you how extremely happy I am to be sharing one of my life's biggest treasures, my gratitude practice in the form of this Holiday Gratitude Guide! I have designed this Holiday Gratitude Guide to help teach you how to use something as simple as gratitude to make your holiday season even merrier and brighter this year, and to make the holly jolly last the whole year through! Holidays can be filled with stress and unmet expectations- but only if you let them. Gratitude can be more than an emotion or fleeting feeling, it can be used intentionally as a tool to change the way you think, to enjoy life more, and to savor the magic the holidays can bring. Are you ready? Let's dive in!

Mary Beth Henry

Introduction

I wasn't always so grateful.

Going back several years, "gratitude practice" wasn't even in my vocabulary.

Of course I knew that being grateful was important and I had much to be grateful for- a happy, healthy marriage, awesome little kids to love, and lots of life's extras. But for me, when I thought of being grateful an image of my mother with her finger wagging came to mind. Gratitude didn't come naturally just yet, and in hindsight I was unknowingly spending much of my time in a selfish and self-absorbed state of mind, feeling sorry for myself and all that my life lacked. Having children was my first real surge of genuine gratitude. This is when my thoughts and prayers finally started to make their turn away from myself and towards their needs. While I was deeply grateful for my children and for the life I had, the thoughts were fleeting between diaper changes, tantrums, and finding spoiled bottles of formula that had rolled under the couch.

It wasn't until I intentionally began working on my own personal development that I came across gratitude as a more purposeful practice. What used to feel harsh soon felt like a gift. I started with a simple gratitude journal with the expectation that writing down what I was grateful for would give me the "warm and fuzzies" and I would be able to focus on what I DO have instead of what I don't. All this happened, and more. To my surprise I was noticing some shifts in my mindset and quality of life too! Could it be that gratitude was making these changes? Something as simple as gratitude was improving my relationship with my husband, encouraging me as a mother, helping me find purpose in life, and even improving my finances? I decided to dig deeper and find out what this was all about.

I read some books, took classes, and even began to develop my own ideas on how gratitude enhances one's life. Now as a student of Positive Psychology and reading the research myself, this all makes sense. Gratitude is some serious life-changing magic!

You don't need to read the research. Read this guide and try it yourself!



How to use this guide

This guide is just that... a guide. It is not a rule book or an instruction manual. A gratitude practice is very personal, and is meant to be developed and deepened over time. What might be right for me or others might not be right for you. You may have even tried some of this before and felt it wasn't for you. I encourage you to give it another go. Read through this guide as it is full of tips and insight to help you create a practice that works best for you. Try some of the methods and incorporate what feels best! You might even come up with some of your own ideas too. I am confident that you will gain some great ideas through this guide and learn a lot. But remember, it's called a "practice" for a reason. This isn't one and done. Incorporate gratitude into your life as a practice and watch the beautiful shifts for yourself. I am SO excited for you!

What is a "gratitude practice?"

We all recognize gratitude as a feeling of appreciation after something is done. A gratitude practice is an *intentional act* before or after something is done to create positive emotions. Incorporating gratitude into your life in this way will have countless benefits.

Why Gratitude?

Did you know gratitude has many benefits! It has been scientifically proven to...

- make you at least 25% happier
- improve your physical health
- improve immunity
- rewire your brain for more positive thinking
- improve your sleep
- improve your relationships
- boost your performance at work
- increase your self esteem and confidence
- create more abundance
- shield against negativity and negativity bias
- eliminate stress
- improve symptoms of anxiety and depression
- be more satisfied
- be less materialistic
- be less likely to suffer from burnout

JUST TO NAME A FEW!



Grateful thoughts

The best way to start your gratitude practice is to **INTENTIONALLY** set time aside to think about what you are grateful for. You can do this by mentally listing what you are grateful for, or by starting a gratitude list or journal. Many people like to say prayers of gratitude to start their day! The most important tip is to think of something new each time you do it. This keeps your practice fresh, relevant, and meaningful.

Grateful thoughts can be practiced every day, every few days, or even every week! No amount is too little or too much, you do you, Boo!



Grateful feelings

To take your gratitude practice a bit deeper, advance onto grateful feelings. Look at your journals or lists and think about how each of these things make you feel. Ask yourself, who contributed to this to make this special for me? Spend time imagining what life would be like without these things. Savor all the good, positive emotions that come from this experience and write it all down in the form of a journal entry. Again, the frequency is up to you as long as you keep it fresh, relevant, and meaningful to you.



Gratitude in action

The way to experience maximum benefits of your gratitude practice is to put your gratitude in action.

Another way to say this is to "use your blessings to bless others."

Start by thinking of one area of your life in which you feel especially abundant. Could be the love of your friends and/or family, could be that you have financial abundance, could be that you have an abundance of patience or creativity. Acknowledging this abundance is powerful in the first place! Now, think of different ways you can "pay it forward."

Choose something big, or even something small. The recipient of your action will feel wonderful, and good deeds beget more good deeds. In addition, YOU will feel amazing too! These gifts are the gifts that keep on giving, create community, strengthen relationships, and a sense of contribution. Growth and contribution equate to ultimate fulfillment. How can you bless others today?





Ways to practice...

Now that you know all about what a gratitude practice is, why it's so beneficial, and the few types of gratitude practices I've identified, let's get into the "HOW." Below are some ideas on how you can start incorporating this magic into your life. Take what works, and leave what doesn't. As I said, a gratitude practice is personal. What works for me may not float your boat, but that doesn't mean you should write off the practice altogether. Keep searching until you've curated the best practice for you!

Morning routine- First thoughts

Before your feet hit the floor in the morning, think of something you are grateful for and looking forward to for that specific day. Starting your day with a grateful thought will help thwart negative thinking, and start you off on the right foot with positive emotions.

Evening Routine- Three Good Things

Each evening, list three good things that happened during your day, how they made you feel, and anyone that helped contribute. This is especially important on the "bad days" we have. It helps open up our thinking to realize there is ALWAYS something good, and always things to be grateful for in each day.

Ways to practice...

Gratitude Journaling

Take some time to think about what you are grateful for and write it down in a journal. Keep it fresh by choosing something new each time you write. Take time every so often to go back and read what you wrote to remember and savor those good feelings.

Gratitude memories

Take a trip down memory lane! You can do this with another person, or just think and/or write this by yourself. Take time to reminisce about the good times, recall the details of the event (sights, sounds, smells), and savor the good feelings. Remembering a positive memory can be just as emotionally beneficial as when you experienced it!

Gratitude letters

Deliver undelivered gratitude in a gratitude letter. Studies show that the act of writing and hand delivering a thank you letter to someone has lasting positive effects for over a month for both the sender and the recipient!

Gratitude games

Creating games with gratitude is fun for the whole family!

- Try "gratitude ping pong" at dinnertime when someone comes home grumpy. It's simple, just go back and forth saying what you are grateful for. No one is allowed to repeat anyone else's gratitude. This keeps our brains searching for good in the world around us!
- Play Gratitude Pictionary and guess the gratitude!

Ways to practice...

Gratitude crafts

Create gratitude crafts with the family!

1. Construct a "gratitude tree" using a small branch from outside and paper leaves. Write down what you are grateful for on the leaves, glue to the branches, and put the branches in a decorative vase! Perfect centerpiece for holiday dinners!
2. Put together a gratitude collage! Cut out pictures of people and things you are grateful for. Search magazines for words that describe your grateful feelings! Put it somewhere you will be able to see it and admire.

Use Gratitude primers

Gratitude primers are visual reminders to practice gratitude. For example, you may have a bracelet that says "grateful" on it and every time you look at it you mentally list your gratitude. You may opt to practice gratitude while you brush your teeth in the morning. You could also leave sticky notes around as reminders too! Anything that starts the mental process of practicing gratitude will do.

Gratitude for self

Take some time to list all different things about yourself that you could be grateful for and write out WHY. Don't forget to not only list the things you perceive as good, list some of the not-do-good too. All these things make you who you are, help you contribute to the world, and provide ample learning experiences and growth, You are amazing just the way you are. Get grateful for you!

Gratitude in action

How can you use your blessings to bless others? Some acts of service go a long way! Volunteer at a soup kitchen, help run a coat drive or a diaper drive, help teach someone else something you know how to do.... There are so many areas in your life that are abundant and paying that forward is the ultimate gift.

Conclusion

Have I convinced you that a gratitude practice is freaking awesome, simple, and fun? I hope so! Adding this simple practice to your life during the holiday season is guaranteed to amp up your holiday enjoyment this year. You create holiday magic for everyone else, it's time you get some too!

Thank you so much for checking out this free guide. I hope you learned something and are excited about trying some of these ideas and maybe even trying some ideas of your own.

Merry-Happy everything and God bless!

Love,
Mary Beth

Questions?

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