

# Gratitude Practices



Numerous scientific studies in the recent past have shown the value of practicing gratitude on a regular basis. Benefits of a gratitude practice include decreased depression, better physical health, increased satisfaction with life, better sleep, less fatigue, and less likely to suffer burnout, among others. The experience of gratitude has deep roots in the circuitry of the brain and shifts our emotions into a more positive state. A regular practice of gratitude actually has lasting beneficial effects on the brain. Spiritually speaking, gratitude is one of the keys to awakening to higher consciousness.

Here are some common practices that you can utilize to enhance your experience of gratitude:

## **1. Keep a gratitude journal**

Dedicate a specific journal or notebook to your gratitude practice. Each night before you go to bed make a list of 3 things you are grateful for from this day. Research shows that reflecting on those positive aspects of your life before you go to sleep will help you relax and will improve the quality of your sleep.

## **2. Write “thank you” letters**

Using your journal you can write a letter expressing gratitude to someone who has shown you kindness or generosity. It isn't necessary to actually send the letter but you certainly can if you feel motivated. You can also write letters to people from your past who have made a difference in your life.

## **3. View life as a gift**

When you live from a place of humility and surrender you will recognize that all of your life is a gift and your sense of gratitude will be enhanced. Take time in your meditation to contemplate the fact that life is short and you are indeed fortunate to receive each and every day that you are here on planet Earth. Write about the gift of life in your journal.

#### 4. Say “thank you” to others throughout the day

Notice the “little miracles” of your life each day and recognize the people who make life special. Remember to express gratitude freely and frequently every day. Note in your gratitude journal any people you remembered to thank that day.

#### 5. Be grateful even for challenges

As we are learning on the journey from ego to Soul, our challenges are our greatest teachers. Take time to write in your journal how your challenges have helped you grow and learn.

#### 6. Say “Grace” before meals

A simple way to add a gratitude practice to your life is to pause for a few seconds before each meal to experience thankfulness for the food you are about to eat. This will shift your energy and emotions to a positive state before you eat which is good for your digestion and can help you eat more mindfully. Make up your own blessings or use these from the book *A Grateful Heart: Daily Blessings for the Evening Meal from Buddha to the Beatles*, edited by M.J. Ryan:

Let us give thanks for the food we are about to eat.  
May there be food for all, abundant and healthful.  
Let us have the wisdom to choose to eat only that  
which enhances our precious energy  
and sustains us through our labors and rest.

- adapted from *An Haggadah of Liberation*

Make a silent prayer acknowledging yourself as a vehicle of light,  
giving thanks for all that has come today.

- Dhyani Ywahoo

May the food we are eating make us aware of the interconnections  
between the universe and us, the earth and us, and all other living  
species and us. Because each bite contains in itself the life of the sun  
and the earth, may we see the meaning and value of life from these  
precious morsels of food.

- adapted from Thich Nhat Hahn

For more ideas check out **Gratefulness.org** and **Greater Good Science Center**

Also listen to the podcast: **The Science of Happiness**