The GRATITUDE GUIDE
by Intelligent Change
Those who don’t believe in magic will never find it.

- ROALD DAHL
WHAT IS GRATITUDE?

This nifty emotion defies easy classification. Gratitude, derived from the Latin word gratia (meaning grace, graciousness or gratefulness) eludes easy explanation by academics. Definitions such as “the willingness to recognize the unearned increments of value in one’s experience” look great on term papers but don’t get the point across. We will not attempt to disguise imprecision with ten dollar words.

Gratitude is the experience of counting one’s blessings.

It is the feeling that embodies the word “Thank you”. It is the unexpected reward of a kind deed that is magically produced by your brain. It’s the cute, tingly feeling in your body that makes you smile at strangers.

Why do scientists love gratitude?

Even after critically analyzing Law of Attraction-style belief systems, gratitude has shown to be quite transformative in humans ranging from entrepreneurs to parents to students.

A 2003 study by Emmons and McCullough found that keeping a daily gratitude journal leads to better sleep, reductions in physical pain, a greater sense of well-being, and a better ability to handle change.
Writing
Gratitudes
PREVENTING REPETITIVENESS

The first week of adopting a gratitude practice may seem like sunshine and rainbows. You feel more positive. Good things start randomly happening. All is right with the world. And then it happens.

Writing what you are grateful for each day starts getting repetitive. Gratitude becomes a chore.

*How many more ways can I say I am grateful for Mom?*

*How many more ways can I appreciate the weather?*

These experiences are bound to happen.

*The following is how you can keep your gratitude practice fresh for years to come.*

1. *Get Specific*

The more detailed you get with gratitude, the more impactful it will be. Saying “I am grateful for Mom” is nice IF you connect with the feeling behind it. But it can quickly feel repetitive saying this for several weeks in a row. Sorry Mom.

To remedy this, pick something specific like, “I am grateful for Mom’s laugh” or, “I am grateful for Mom not telling me to clean my room as an adult.”

You want enough detail so you can VISUALIZE the gratitude and FEEL it. This is key.
2. Use Negative Visualization

Odds are you have (or are considering) a gratitude practice is because you find it easy to be a critic rather than a celebrator. Most people do. In psychology, they call this the negativity bias.

Now is the time to use this to your advantage. Instead of visualizing all the good in your life, imagine it was all taken away.


Kind of jarring, isn’t it? This used to be an old Stoic exercise that put the people and things you value into perspective real quick. The stoics would even take it as far to dress in their worst clothes and go without food for a day to up the stakes. For our purposes, we’ll keep it strictly to gratitude journaling :)

Imagine your mobility was drastically reduced. Imagine not having your phone for the day (the horror!). Imagine you lost your best friend. Doing this exercise is often one of the most powerful.

3. Use Gratitude Categories

For all you planners out there, you’ll love this one. Instead of trying to randomly think of gratitudes each day, you’ll add a bit of structure. It’s simple.

Pick a gratitude category for each day of the week.
It could look like this:

**Monday** = gratitude for romantic relationship

**Tuesday** = gratitude for family

**Wednesday** = gratitude about things I like in myself

**Thursday** = gratitude about things I own

**Friday** = gratitude about the world

**Saturday** = gratitude about friends

**Sunday** = gratitude about how my negative qualities could be positive qualities

Pick a few categories. Pick a different category each day. Do what your heart desires. Using planned spontaneity can be an effective ally.

**BONUS: Share your gratitude with others**

Although on the surface this seems simple, telling others how awesome they are can feel weird. *Will they think I have an agenda? Will they think I’m weird? They probably already know how I feel.*

Gratitude is all about the emotion. If you just intellectually THINK about gratitude without feeling, you are receiving little psychological boost. Sharing your gratitudes with others can take the emotion to the next level.