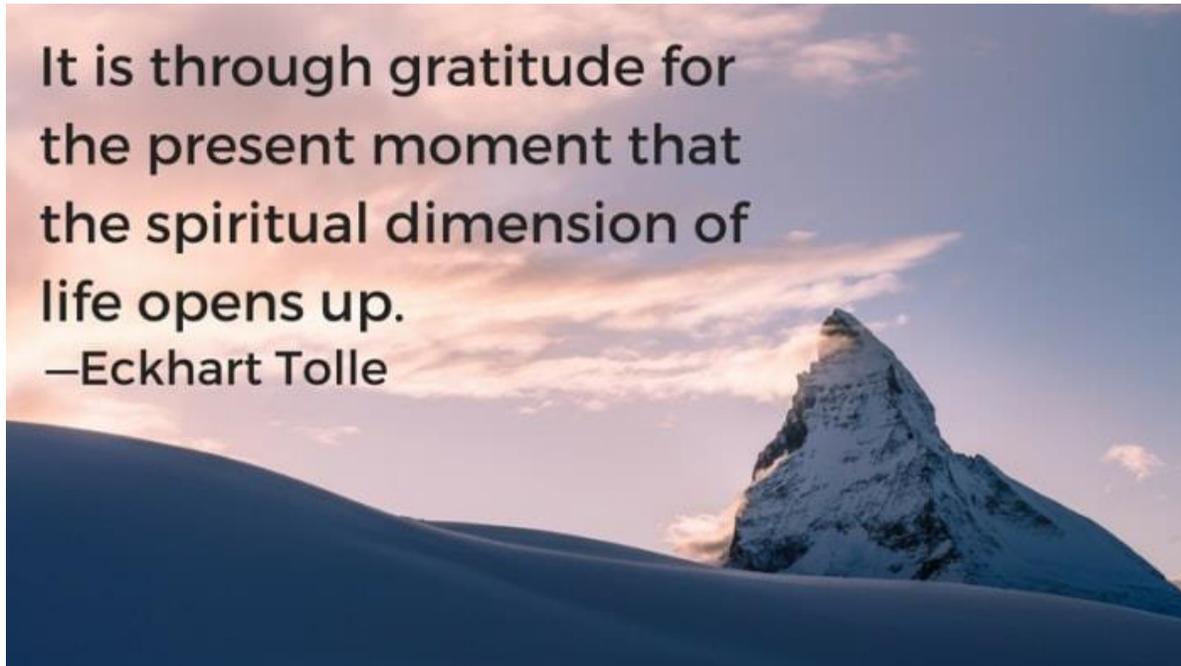


Women of Enlightenment Support Group



November 2018: Gratitude

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HOW TO START A GRATITUDE JOURNAL YOU'LL ACTUALLY KEEP

If someone were to ask you what you're grateful for in the present moment, would you have an answer ready to go? Could you easily recall the small moments in your day that bring you the most joy? The simple habit of reflecting on what you're grateful for can actually lead to a happier, more content life. All it takes is a few moments of your time and a gratitude journal to record your thoughts. Gratitude journals are not unlike the diary you kept as a teenager, but instead of writing random thoughts about your day, you write about the things you're grateful for—big or small.

Everyone's gratitude journal will be different. Some people will simply write about their day while others might choose a specific gratitude quote to focus on. The most important part is that you pick a schedule that works for you and your lifestyle. Here are some tips to help you start a gratitude journal of your own and how to make it a habit you will easily stick to.

1. Choose A Journal

The first (and easiest) step to starting your new gratitude journaling habit is picking a journal. When choosing a gratitude journal there are a few things to consider. Do you prefer to write in a physical journal or record your thoughts digitally? Will you be carrying it around with you or keeping it in one place? Do you want lined or unlined pages? These are all factors that contribute to which journal is ultimately right for you.

Traditional journals offer the most flexibility because they're durable and portable, but for quick exercises or jotting down reminders throughout the day notepads can be an equally great way to record your thoughts. Whatever you choose, consider whether you'll be using it exclusively for gratitude journaling or for daily planning as well. Sometimes a new journal is exactly what you need to inspire you to get started.

2. Focus On The Gratitude Journal Benefits

Understanding why you're doing something instead of just jumping in will make your new habit easier to stick to. For example, you know you have to brush your teeth and even though the act of brushing your teeth isn't necessarily enjoyable, you do it because you know it prevents cavities. The same applies to gratitude journaling (although it's a lot more enjoyable than brushing your teeth).

Some of the benefits of gratitude journaling include lower stress levels, a greater sense of calm and a whole new level of clarity. You'll learn more about yourself in the process and gain a fresh perspective that allows you to recognize blessings in disguise. As you continue the practice, you'll be able to focus your time and energy according to the things that truly make you the happiest version of yourself.

3. Set Aside Time For Writing

Finding time to write in your gratitude journal can be difficult at first because it feels like another thing on your neverending to-do list, but after you get into the routine it becomes second nature. The easiest way to maintain a gratitude journal is by making it a habit. Try attaching it to an existing habit like having your morning coffee or reading before bed. Doing this will automatically give you a dedicated time to write. Also, shift your mindset and think about it as something you want to do, not as a chore.

You might think that you have to journal daily to see the benefits, but consistency is key. If writing daily works for you then go for it, but if you can only squeeze in once a week, that's fine too. As long as you get into the routine of writing in your journal on a regular basis, you'll start to notice the benefits.

4. Start With Gratitude Journal Prompts

If you're new to gratitude journaling, it can feel daunting to look at a blank page. Try writing about these simple prompts to get the gratitude flowing.

- Write about a time you were grateful for something a loved one did for you.
- List three silly things your kids did today.
- What are three ways to thank someone without saying “thank you”?
- What is something that makes you unique that you're grateful for?
- Look out the window, what's something you're grateful for outside?
- Think about the work that went into the clothes you wear or the house you live in.
- If you had to give up all of your possessions but three, which three would you keep and why?
- Write a thank you note to yourself.
- Pick a random photo and write about why you're grateful for that memory.
- Write about something you're looking forward to.
- Write about something in your life that you have now that you didn't have a year ago.
- Reflect on a time you made a mistake and what you learned. What are you grateful for about that learning experience?
- Write about why you're grateful for your house—these quotes about home might help inspire you to expand your thinking.
- Think back to the last time you laughed until you cried and write about it.
- List three things that made you smile this week.
- Think about someone who helped shape the person you are today and write about what they mean to you.
- Think about a time you were able to help someone else.
- List three people who helped you through a tough situation.
- Name someone who did something nice for you unprompted.

5. Think Of Fresh Topics

Even after you've been successfully journaling for a while, it can be challenging to think of new things to write about. If you've already written about a certain topic, think of a new angle. For example, if you've already written about why you're grateful for your spouse, try viewing them from a someone else's perspective. You may find new things to write about like "I'm grateful for the way they treat others."

Just remember that you can write about anything, no matter how big or small. If you're still at a loss, here are some unexpected gratitude journal ideas to help you get over that case of writer's block.

People to write about:

- A person you haven't spoken to in a while
- Someone who lives far away
- Your kid's teachers
- Your coworkers
- Someone you have a hard time getting along with
- A musician, author or artist whose work particularly inspires you
- A stranger who brightened your day

Things to write about:

- Your morning coffee
- Your favorite food
- Things you use daily
- Your job
- Activities or hobbies you enjoy
- Your body
- Your sense of smell, sight, taste etc.

Places to write about:

- The city you live in
- Your favorite vacation destination
- Your desk at work
- Your bed
- Your neighborhood park
- Your hometown
- Your favorite store

Ideas to write about:

- A family tradition
- A silly moment
- A struggle you're facing
- A recent change in your life
- A recent accomplishment
- The current season
- Something new you learned recently

6. Find What Works For You

One of the most liberating parts of gratitude journaling is that there are no rules. It's for your eyes only (unless you choose to share it with someone), so feel free to make it all about your interests and what makes you happy. Love to doodle? Get a journal with blank, unlined pages and accompany your notes with drawings. Are you a visual person? Practice your photo skills and paste prints onto the pages to make a gratitude journal-scrapbook hybrid.

As you become more comfortable, consider getting your spouse and kids involved. Share the things you're grateful for around the dinner table or make it part of the nightly bedtime routine. It can be great family time and will help hold you accountable.

7. Check In With Yourself Regularly

Just like it's important to know why you're starting a new habit, it's also a good practice to check in with yourself every once in a while. Are you feeling any different after one week? One month? One year? Think about how your happiness has improved over time. Maybe your interactions with others have improved or your self-talk has become more positive. If you ever need a pick me up, go back and revisit old pages to see how far you've come.

Now that you know how to get started, you're well on your way to a successful gratitude journaling practice. You might find that reflecting on the things you're grateful for will inspire you to express that gratitude to others. Consider sharing a sentimental best friend quote with a friend you've lost touch with or send a thank you card for a small gesture someone did for you. Just remember not to get too discouraged when starting your journal, it takes time to create a new habit. The positive effects are endless, now it's time to find out for yourself!

Gratitude

<https://www.shutterfly.com/ideas/how-to-start-a-gratitude-journal/>

<https://www.intelligentchange.com/blogs/news/the-ultimate-guide-to-keeping-a-gratitude-journal>

<https://tinybuddha.com/blog/turn-pain-to-joy-11-tips-for-a-powerful-gratitude-journal/>

<https://penzu.com/gratitude-journal>