

Gratitude and Joy Practices

A growing evidence of research shows how the practice of acknowledging gratitude and/or moments of joy in your day can make a difference to your mood, and your emotional and physical wellbeing.

We know that primitive protection systems in our body and mind are designed to keep us safe, by being primed to look for danger. In daily life this can actually look like a bias towards noticing the negative, the worries, the potentially anxieties we may face.

Learning to notice and acknowledge moments of gratitude and joy in our lives helps our brain, mind and body focus on aspects of the day that can bring us calm, peace, happiness, light. It soothes our mind, our nervous system, our physical system.

Gratitude

Practicing gratitude is something we can learn to do every day. Robert Emmons, a leading researcher on gratitude explains how gratitude improves your physical, psychological and social functioning. He explains about how he defines gratitude:

" ..First, it's an affirmation of goodness. We affirm that there are good things in the world, gifts and benefits we've received. This doesn't mean that life is perfect; it doesn't ignore complaints, burdens, and hassles. But when we look at life as a whole, gratitude encourages us to identify some amount of goodness in our life. The second part of gratitude is figuring out where that goodness comes from. We recognize the sources of this goodness as being outside of ourselves. It didn't stem from anything we necessarily did ourselves in which we might take pride. We can appreciate positive traits in ourselves, but I think true gratitude involves a humble dependence on others: We acknowledge that other people—or even higher powers, if you're of a spiritual mindset—gave us many gifts, big and small, to help us achieve the goodness in our lives"¹.

Taking time for gratitude practices – some ideas

- When you wake in the morning, take a moment. Take a deep breath. Then let yourself name 3 things to feel grateful for today. This can range from – the roof over your head, a warm bed, food in the fridge, your health, the sun shine, a kind friend or family member, your work, the ability to earn money, walk, speak, your hobbies,so many things. Just pick 3.
- You can repeat the same exercise as you go to bed, and reflecting back on the day

¹ [Why Gratitude Is Good | Greater Good \(berkeley.edu\)](https://www.berkeley.edu)

- Begin a gratitude journal (either get your own notebook or buy a specific gratitude journal) and practice journaling with some gratitude prompts each day

Read more here: [How to Practice Gratitude - Mindful](#) and here: [The Gratitude Journal: Prompts, PDFs and Worksheets \(positivepsychology.com\)](#)

Joy

Researcher Dr Pamela King describes how joy is: *“more complex than a feeling or an emotion. It is something one can practice, cultivate, or make a habit”*². Brene Brown author of the Gifts of Imperfection explains how: *“Joy is not a constant. It comes to us in moments—often ordinary moments”*. And Angela Gorrell, author of The Gravity of Joy explains: *“Joy is what we feel deep in our bones when we realize and feel connected to others—and to what is genuinely good, beautiful, and meaningful—which is possible even in pain... joy does not depend on good circumstances”*

Finding moments of Joy

- Hold onto the idea that you can find joy every day, even during difficult times
- You can learn to look for and notice/acknowledge moments of joy, however fleeting
- You can find joy in a kind touch, a supportive comment, a beautiful sunset, a moment of peace, hearing a favourite song on the radio, smelling cut grass, making/hearing a loved one laugh, a good book, a warm bed, a moment with a friend.....
- When you notice these moments, mindfully let yourself acknowledge them. Let yourself notice, name, feel the joy in the moment. Take a breath and breathe it in.
- Know there can be joy and there can be pain. There can be joy and there can be challenges. Both can exist and both can be seen, heard, listened to.

Read more here: [3 Simple Ways to Cultivate Joy Every Day - Mindful](#)

² [What Is Joy and What Does It Say About Us? | Psychology Today](#)