



Introduction to Gratitude Journaling

Gratitude journaling is not about ignoring pain or pretending that life is perfect. It is about creating a quiet space each day to turn toward ourselves with kindness and ask:

- **What do I need to feel good today?**
- **What has helped me feel good recently? (three things am I grateful for)**

These gentle questions are an act of mindful self-compassion. Instead of pushing through or judging ourselves for not being enough, we pause and listen to our own needs. Some days, what we need might be rest, movement, connection, or simply permission to feel what we feel--remember, you are not a robot, you are a human BE-ing!

Alongside this self-check-in, we write down three specific things you are grateful for.

These do not need to be big or extraordinary: The science of happiness (positive psychology) tells us that gratitude works best when it is grounded in *the ordinary*—the delicious flavor of a cup of warm tea, a kind word from a woman as you left the shop, the way the sunlight shines through the window to make the dust sparkle--and you got to see it. **<<some people call these shimmers or glimmers**

It's important to remember that gratitude is not about "pushing the goalpost forward," aka chasing the next milestone before we allow ourselves happiness. So if you catch yourself saying "*I'll be happy when.... I get that raise, get the house organized, get over that breakup, etc.,*" you are encouraged to bring your mind back to the current moment/day.

Many wisdom traditions conclude that the goal of our human existence is to have the willpower to choose to experience moments of joy and meaning even in the midst of uncertainty or chaos. Holocaust survivors and other witnesses of great suffering have reminded us that this is the essence of resilience: **finding something to hold onto, however small, that reminds us life is still worth living and that we are not in control (of very much at all); we admit we do not understand the big picture and accept our human limitations.**

By beginning or ending each day (and remember we don't expect perfection, so start with a goal of doing this two days a week and work up) with compassion for ourselves and gratitude for what is already here, we strengthen our capacity to face challenges with steadiness and hope.

Gratitude Practice Outline

1. The Power of the Pause

Before you begin writing, take one slow, gentle breath.

- Inhale fully, noticing your body soften as you fill with air.
- Exhale slowly, releasing what you don't need right now.
- Pause at the end of the breath. Rest here for a moment.

This pause is your doorway into gratitude. It slows the mind, centers the heart, and opens space for compassion.

2. Mindful Self-Compassion Check-In

"What three things can I do to feel good today that support my values?" (There are no wrong answers. It may be rest, encouragement, movement, connection, or simply permission to feel what you feel.)

3. Three Specific Gratitudes

Now, write down three things you are grateful for today/recently. Keep them small and specific—tiny details often carry the greatest meaning.

4. Reflection Prompt

Gratitude is not about waiting for life to be perfect. It's about finding peace and hope even in the middle of uncertainty. Survivors of great suffering have shown us that pausing to notice beauty—however small—is one of the roots of resilience. **Where did I experience a moment of peace, connection, or hope today?**

 Each time you practice, say "I did it!" and acknowledge that you took a step to change the grooves in your brain: one breath, one pause, one gratitude at a time. This is how resilience grows and we stay on our path of healing (+ remember, it's always heal-ing, never healed, done).
Well done, dear one!