

Inward Bound Network

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What does it mean to practice gratitude?

Gratitude is simply defined as the state of being grateful. It involves expressing thanks or appreciation for something, from a gift to life itself. Gratitude involves recognition of the positive things in your life and how they affect you. This can range from acknowledging a beautiful flower you pass on the sidewalk to the feeling of thanks that comes from recovering from a serious illness.

You can practice gratitude in lots of different ways, like:

- gratitude exercises, such as journaling
- paying attention to the little things in life, like the birds in the trees
- telling someone you're grateful for them or for something they did, even if it was a long time ago
- doing something kind for someone in your life to express your gratitude
- meditating on the positive aspects of your life
- giving thanks through prayer

Getting started practicing gratitude

If you're looking to start practicing gratitude regularly, there are plenty of useful exercises to help you integrate it into your daily life.

Gratitude journaling

Gratitude journaling is a technique that involves keeping a diary of things you're grateful for every day. This is one of the most popular ways to practice gratitude. A great practice to do before going to sleep each evening.

Some good starting points are to recount a favorite moment from the day, describe a special person in your life, or list 2 or 3 things you're grateful for that day.



Gratitude mapping

Gratitude mapping is perfect for visual learners. It involves creating a visual mood board of everything you're grateful for. You then place this board somewhere in your home to remind yourself to be grateful every day.

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Gratitude jars

Gratitude jars are a simple idea that's easy to put into practice.

Whenever something good happens or you feel thankful for something, write it down on a piece of paper and put it in a jar. Next time you're feeling down, give the jar a shake and pick out one slip of paper.

This technique will remind you of something good in your life that you can appreciate. It can help you recall simple pleasures that you might have otherwise forgotten.



Morning meditation

A morning meditation practice can also involve gratitude.

You can choose to meditate on things you're grateful for, or you may find it easier to meditate on how you've gotten to where you are now.

To do this, remember the past, both good and bad. Reflect on how far you've come since then. This puts the present into context and allows you to clearly see it, helping you feel grateful for what brought you to this point.

The morning is often the best time to practice gratitude meditation, as it sets you up for the day with an optimistic outlook. It can also be beneficial to use your practice as a way to wind down before bed.

Prayer

Prayer is another way to practice gratitude. Whatever you believe in, prayer can be a helpful tool for generating feelings of gratitude. It's also been linked to positive health outcomes.

Expressing gratitude to a higher power or simply to the universe can be a profound way to evoke a sense of awe and appreciation. As you pray, you can express gratitude for the world you live in, the air you breathe, and the body that carries you from point A to point B.

Prayer is a chance to marvel at life and the miracle of existence. It doesn't have to involve a particular belief or tradition, but can simply be a way of giving thanks for being alive.

Volunteering

Volunteering is a practical way to practice gratitude. Helping those in need can inspire you to reflect on your own circumstances and bring on a sense of compassion for humanity as a whole.