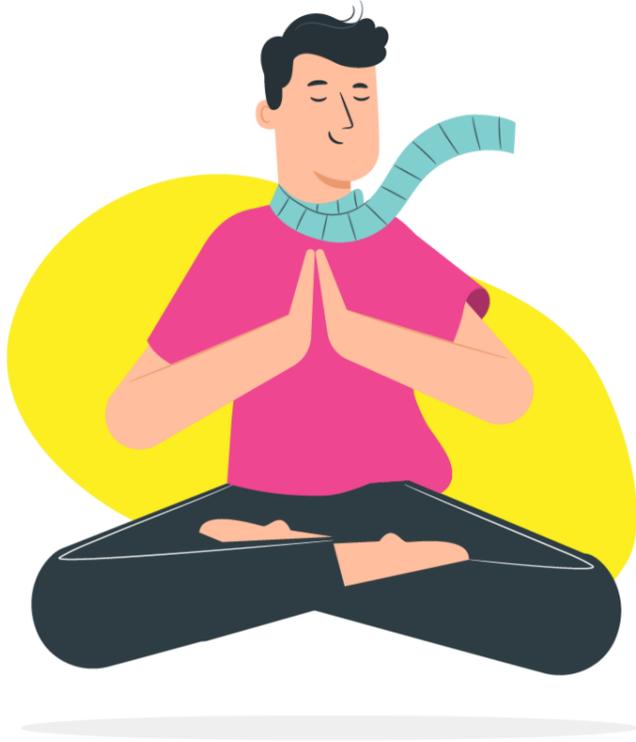


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## 4 Research-Backed Tips to Make Self-Gratitude a Habit

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# 4 Research-Backed Tips to Make Self-Gratitude a Habit

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When you think of the word “gratitude,” what first comes to mind? Personally, I don’t immediately think of the “self” in gratitude. It seems far-fetched. We have been taught and conditioned that feeling grateful happens when it is related to a person or situation involving people we feel thankful for (Skrzenlinska & Ferreira, 2020). In other words, feeling grateful is usually synonymous with being in-tune with our interpersonal relationships without considering the intrapersonal aspect of ourselves. But self-gratitude is just as important. Research shows that **in the process of enabling ourselves to be grateful for our surroundings, we must first acknowledge the good in our life from within**, such as our general self-worth or what’s intrinsically good about the self (Lin, 2015).

### How Is Self-Gratitude Important?

Homan and Hosack (2019) have theorized the mechanism behind self-gratitude through the amplification theory of gratitude. As the name implies, it’s a trait where we’re disposed to notice and appreciate the positive things in life, hence amplifying how we experience the good in life (Wood et al., 2010; Watkins, 2014). That is why people who possess higher self-gratitude tend to experience lower incidences of depression, anxiety, and loneliness (Brown et al., 2010), or even lesser intensity of anger and personal

experience lower incidences of depression, anxiety, and loneliness (Breen et al., 2010), or even lesser intensity of anger and general vindictiveness toward others they perceive have wronged them (McCullough et al., 2002). This is possible because people who exhibit self-gratitude tend to have higher levels of self-compassion and self-acceptance, which simultaneously enable them to remember memories of the past from a more positive lens (Homan & Hosack, 2019).



However, shifting our perspective to a more positive one through gratitude isn't as simple as that. Some of us are probably more used to seeing things from a negative light that we find it excruciatingly difficult to change them. So there's a good chance that it won't happen overnight. Instead, think of self-gratitude as a long game; it's like investing in your better future self. A recent study has shown that practicing these four gratitude habits can significantly improve our psychological well-being in the long term (Skrzenlinska & Ferreira, 2020).

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## 1. Write Weekly or Daily Gratitude Notes

Emmons (2007) analyzed how the act of reflecting gratefully impacts one's psychological well-being. Reflecting in this sense includes writing weekly or daily gratitude journals, diaries, and lists or letters. It is found that simply writing down five things participants were grateful for each day significantly improves their positive feelings. Plus, they experienced better sleep patterns and were more optimistic than the group which did not write the journal. Through this finding, you can implement gratefulness journaling as well in your daily routine. Write down five things you're most grateful for each day. No matter how big or small. Don't forget to do it on a regular basis and track how it affects your general well-being.

## 2. Express Gratitude to Self and Others



Besides communicating your feelings of gratitude through a written journal, it's also good practice to verbally convey them to yourself or those around you. Expressing gratitude verbally is the more proactive and engaging way of telling yourself and the other person that you deeply care about the relationship. Studies found that implementing this technique can make you feel more comfortable around yourself or the other person. Moreover, it also allows you to feel more at ease when voicing any concerns you have regarding yourself or the other person (Harvard Health, 2021). In other words, you will have more compassion for others by doing it.

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### 3. Pay Attention to Your Daily Routines

Practicing gratitude for the long term doesn't stop at shifting your thoughts and conveying them the right way. It's also about your overall daily habits and what you can do to lead a healthier life in the long run. After all, studies have shown a strong association between physical and mental health (Ohrnberger, Fichera, & Sutton, 2017). So exercise regularly, drink enough water, eat more vegetables, and most importantly, get enough sleep each night.

### 4. Watch Your Language

Last but not least, be mindful about how you talk to yourself and label your actions. Our brains are smart. It learns through what we feed them. If you keep telling yourself that you're not good enough or that it's impossible to improve yourself, it will create pathways to convince yourself that it's the truth. It becomes something that you'll be comfortable with hearing about; it becomes the norm. And it's certainly not good. Negative self-talk such as rumination and self-blame perpetuate feelings of helplessness and depression (Kinderman, 2013). So be kind to yourself each day. If you feel like certain things could have gone better, tell yourself that it's okay to try again next time. Nothing's set in stone.



As previously discussed, practicing self-gratitude may not be something you're going to find easy to do. Many of us grapple with being too unkind to ourselves and our past mistakes. And when we try to be grateful, it's usually in the context of our interpersonal relationships. Yet, how do we begin to completely be thankful for those around us without taking into account what we have for from within?

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