



Beckley
Retreats

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5 Days of Gratitude

Gratitude Day 1: Explore the Research

Renowned psychologists Robert Emmons & Michael McCullough define gratitude as:

- 1) “recognizing that one has obtained a positive outcome,” and
- 2) “recognizing that there is an external source for this positive outcome”

... meaning: gratitude is all about acknowledging that other people, other forces & other factors outside of ourselves have helped us get to where we are.

Research shows that gratitude:

- Has benefits for many areas of our lives (mental wellbeing, physical health, relationships, decision-making, leadership)
- Is more than just a fleeting sensation and can bring about lasting feelings of greater self-esteem and life satisfaction
- Can reduce blood pressure and help regulate the nervous system
- May improve sleep, strengthen the immune system, prevent overeating, inspire exercise, and even extend lifespan

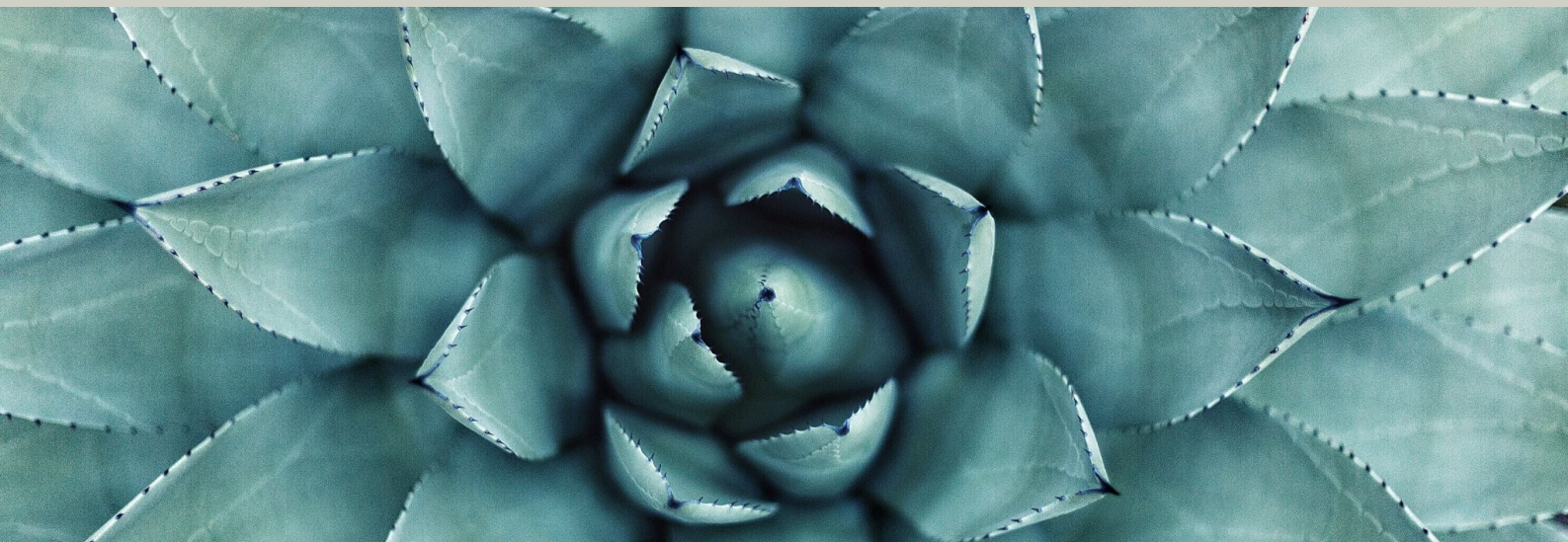
Sources / Dig into the Research

- [Allen, S. \(2018\). The science of gratitude. The Greater Good Science Center.](#)
- [Bouchrika, I. \(January 18, 2024\). 35 scientific benefits of gratitude: Mental health research findings in 2024. Research.com.](#)
- [Giving thanks can make you happier \(August 14, 2021\). Harvard Health Publishing.](#)
- [Pratt, M. \(February 17, 2022\). The science of gratitude. Mindful.](#)

Gratitude Day 2: Reflect on Gratitude in Your Life

Today is all about considering your relationship with gratitude and the role it has played in your life. Find some time to reflect and journal:

- Are you a naturally grateful person or is gratitude something you have had to work on/put effort into? Does feeling grateful come easily to you?
- What types of behaviors did you experience or witness growing up in your family, culture, and/or community regarding gratitude? Was being grateful modeled, valued, and/or expected? How did/does this influence you?
- Do you want to cultivate more gratitude in your life? Why/why not?
- What are the circumstances – both in and out of your control – that might make feeling grateful a challenge?
- What do you notice in your body (subtle sensations) when you reflect on your relationship with gratitude?



Gratitude Day 3: Feel and Practice Gratitude

Try It Out: Ways to Feel and Practice Gratitude

1. **Notice your body.** When you are in a situation or with a person that you're grateful for, check in with how your body feels. Record the sensation to your memory for later recall during gratitude practice.
2. **Do a gratitude meditation.** Slow down, breathe deeply and focus on one person or situation for which you have deep, true gratitude. Continue to breathe deeply and slowly, feeling the sensation in your body and breath.
3. **Keep a gratitude journal.** Write down what you are grateful for based on what happened today. If you can't think of anything from today, keep a running list of 100+ things you're grateful for across your whole life.
4. **Take a gratitude walk.** Take a 10 minute walk and reflect on everything you're grateful for, including whatever you notice in your surroundings.
5. **Create visual cues.** For example, leave a post-it on your nightstand or in your car that says "What are you grateful for?"

NOTE: It can be helpful to choose people and experiences that are easy to cultivate deep, true gratitude for (rather than those we feel we *should* be grateful for). Common examples are pets, children, grandparents & big life blessings. Once we get our "gratitude engine" revving, we can then expand the practice to people and circumstances that may be more difficult to feel grateful for.

Sources / Learn More

- [10 ways to practice gratitude and the benefits, Calm.com](#)
- [How to practice gratitude, Mindful.org](#)
- [Laderer, A. How to make a gratitude practice that doesn't feel like toxic positivity. Wondermind.](#)
- [Nazish, M. \(November 21, 2018\). Five science-backed ways to practice gratitude every day. Forbes.](#)

Gratitude Day 4: Express Gratitude

It's one thing to feel gratitude – and another to share it. The benefits of gratitude on relationships can be profound.

Share Deeply

Identify one or more people for whom you are grateful. This could be someone from your past with whom you want to reconnect, or a family member, friend, or coworker who you see every day. Depending on what's appropriate, you can:

- Write a heartfelt letter of appreciation
- Have a conversation to express your thankfulness - explain how the person has impacted you positively
- Do something kind as a gesture of thanks

Look in the Mirror

You can also express gratitude to yourself. Write yourself a letter: What qualities, behaviors, choices, or decisions make you appreciate yourself?

Express Intentionally

Simply look people in the eye and say “thank you” more often. Consider how you interact with strangers, restaurant servers, grocery clerks, etc. Notice how you feel emotionally and in your body when you simply say “thank you” with presence and intentionality.



Gratitude Day 5: Commit to and Cultivate an Ongoing Gratitude Practice



Keep up the practices and make a plan! Here are some ideas:

- Set alarms on your calendar/phone for gratitude practice ~ Build time into your calendar, even if only for 5 minutes.
- Find an inspiration partner with whom you can discuss gratitude and hold one another accountable for commitments to your gratitude practices.
- Try habit stacking: select a simple habit (such as brushing your teeth) to pair with a short gratitude practice.